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### OFFICIAL PAPERS.

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, AGRICULTURE, AND COMMERCE.

#### REPORTS ON THE SCARCITY OF 1873-74.

EXTRACT from the Proceedings of the Government of India in the Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, Nos. 2-71, dated the 18th February 1875.

##### READ—

Letter from the Government of Bengal, of the 24th November 1874, submitting copies of two Minutes regarding the services of Government Officers, and of non-official residents, during the recent scarcity in Bengal and Behar (published in Special Supplement to *Calcutta Gazette* of 28th December 1874).

Letter from the Government of Bengal, of the 8th December 1874, submitting copies of a Minute recorded by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal on the scarcity in Bengal and Behar during 1873-74, and the measures taken to alleviate the distress caused by it.

Letters from the Government of the North-Western Provinces, of the 1st, 11th, and 29th of January 1875, forwarding reports on the scarcity of 1873-74 in certain districts of the North-Western Provinces, with a brief narrative of the scarcity so far as it affected those Provinces, and the remarks of the Lieutenant-Governor on the conduct of the civil officers engaged in relief operations. (The letter of January 29th will be published in a separate volume).

Letter from the Government of the North-Western Provinces, of the 11th of February 1875, forwarding the report of the Central Famine Relief Committee, North-Western Provinces.

Letter from the Chief Commissioner of Oudh, of the 16th October 1874, submitting a copy of a letter, with enclosures, from the Commissioner of the Fyzabad Division, together with a summary of the measures taken in the northern parts of the Province of Oudh in order to avert famine. (The letter from the Commissioner of Fyzabad, with the enclosures, will be published in a separate volume).

Preliminary report by Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. MacGregor, Director of Transport, of the 19th of October 1874, on the operations of the Transport Department in Behar (published in the *Gazette of India* of 19th December 1874).

Report by Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Taylor, R. E., Consulting Engineer to Government for Guaranteed Railways, of the 23rd December 1874, on the traffic operations of the East Indian Railway in 1873-74.

grain crops has been ascertained, to obtain at once complete reports of its extent, and of the probable consequences upon the food-supply of the people. The admirable series of Minutes written by Sir Richard Temple, when he was deputed to visit the distressed districts, will serve as a model for such reports. The general accuracy of the data supplied to Sir Richard Temple by the Local Officers is remarkable, and illustrates the value of the information which can thus be obtained.

10. The anticipation of the effects of the scarcity was found to be somewhat greater than the reality from two causes. The stock of food in the hands of the people turned out to be larger than was anticipated; and sufficient allowance was not made for the extraordinary exertions which were used by the cultivators to grow a greater quantity than usual of the grain crops which ripen in the autumn. It was impossible to reckon beforehand upon either of these circumstances; but the experience that has now been gained shows, *first*, that where a scarcity follows a fair season, considerable supplies of food will probably be in the possession of the people, and, therefore, sufficient time may be reckoned upon for the purpose of organizing the relief which may ultimately be required; and, *secondly*, that the cultivators of the soil in India are able and willing to make considerable alterations in their agriculture for the sake of increasing the food-supply at the earliest possible moment, by which means the period over which the scarcity would otherwise extend is considerably shortened. The outturn of the autumn crops of 1874 was further increased by the unusual quantity of rain that fell early in the season.

11. It is also important that early assistance should be given, without any hesitation, to the Officers who are employed in districts where the scarcity is known to be imminent, so that they may be left free to move constantly through their districts and to watch the progress of events. Thus accurate information will be secured from the first of the area which is likely to be most severely afflicted, and relief operations may be adjusted accordingly. The critical position of a part of Tirhoot at an early period of the scarcity of last year is mainly to be attributed to the weakness of the staff. This deficiency was promptly supplied, but the lesson should not be forgotten.

12. The experience of former famines with respect to the advantage of opening public works, especially at an early stage of the distress, has been fully confirmed. Large works should be opened at once, smaller local works subsequently, as the necessity for them arises. There should be no hesitation in providing sufficient superintendence. When the distress becomes extensive, it is essential that employment should be available near the usual homes of the people. Sir Richard Temple has justly observed that where very large numbers have to be employed upon public works, piece-work is preferable to other methods for their payment.

13. In dealing with the most distressed districts, it was found that the tests of cooked food and of poor-houses were inapplicable. Such tests can be usefully applied only where the distress is less severe and extensive, and where there is reason to suppose that improper advantage is being taken of the relief offered.

14. Where distress is not great, and where, although it may be great, there is no serious deficiency in the supply of food, relief works, the distribution of gratuitous relief under proper precautions, and advances of money upon sufficient security, will be found (as was the case in the North-Western Provinces, in part of Oudh, and in considerable portions of Bengal) to be sufficient. It is only where there is a great deficiency—and there is also good reason to believe that the traders will be unable to meet that deficiency—that it is right for the State to intervene for the purpose of supplementing the general food-supply. Under such circumstances, however, this is the only means whereby a dearth of food can be prevented; and, during the past year, there can be no reasonable doubt that the measure was imperatively required

In order to prevent a very great mortality. The principal reason of this necessity was the absence of sufficient means of transport by railway or canal. The river communication was but of little use at the time of year when supplies were required, and the carts of the country were not available for ordinary traders in any quantities, and could only be brought out in sufficient numbers by means of an organization which was quite beyond the power of private individuals. As railway communication is extended, the probability of Government being called upon to interfere in this manner with the functions of trade will diminish.

15. The operations for the supply of food by Government on a large scale were novel. The difficulty experienced at first was to arrange that the supplies should reach the people who required them. In fact the Government had, for the time, to fulfil the functions of both wholesale and retail dealers. Every available channel of distribution had to be brought into play. Sir Richard Temple has fully described the method which was adopted. Dealers in grain were assisted in prosecuting their business, which must otherwise have ceased to exist. Advances of grain were freely made to cultivators for the purpose of enabling them to support themselves and to till their land until the next crop should be gathered. This measure was in entire accordance with the customs of the country, and proved very successful.

16. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal will be requested to cause the returns which have been received from the Local Officers to be carefully analysed and condensed for the purpose of exhibiting the extent of the failure of the crops in different parts of the country, as compared with the number of people who have been relieved by the State or who have been supported by food imported by the State. In Durbhunga and Mudhobunee, the two sub-divisions of North Tirhoot where the failure of the rice crop was most complete, half of the population was supported for about four months by food imported by the State. It is therefore unlikely that in the event of any failure of crops which is not prolonged for more than one year Government can have to supply a larger quantity of food than would be sufficient to support for about two months the whole population of the area most severely visited. This calculation, however, and others which are likely to be valuable hereafter, will be elaborated by the Government of Bengal.

17. The stores laid in by the State were not brought into the market until the deficiency of supplies in the local markets proved the necessity of doing so. Up to that time they were only used for the benefit of the people who were collected upon the Government works. When sales to the public were authorized, the price was determined by the principle which was adopted during the Irish famine. This principle was that the price should be regulated by that which prevailed at the nearest large mart situated upon one of the main lines of communication, some addition being made to cover the cost of carriage to the place of sale. It was found in Ireland that, under the operation of this principle, the inconvenience attending an interference with trade was reduced to a minimum, because as soon as traders were able to obtain supplies they could resume their business, and the Government could withdraw from the field, without any serious disturbance of prices. The same result was found to follow in Bengal. Moreover, the supplies of grain provided by Government consisted mainly of Burmese rice, to which the people were not accustomed, and which could not compete upon equal terms with Bengal rice when the latter again appeared in the market. It is remarkable that throughout the whole of these operations no complaints came from traders on the spot that they were injured by the action of Government. On the contrary, Sir Richard Temple received assurances from them of their entire concurrence, and he had to refuse applications for an extension of the sales by Government, a compliance with which rightly appeared to him to be contrary to the principle, which had been laid down from the first, that unnecessary interference with trade should be avoided.

18. It will be seen from Sir Richard Temple's Minute that a balance of about 100,000 tons of rice remained after the relief operations had been concluded. To this extent the measures taken have been in excess of the requirements of the case. The responsibility for this excess rests entirely with the Government of India. Having to deal with so vast a population, whose support depended upon many uncertain contingencies, it would have been imprudent not to have been prepared to meet larger demands than those which were actually made upon the Government. If a substantial reserve had not been provided, the success of the relief operations would properly have been attributed rather to good fortune than to foresight. The experience of last year shows the necessity of such a reserve. In the beginning of September 1874 very great apprehensions were felt that the scarcity would be prolonged. This was only averted by a fall of rain at the very last moment when it could have been of use to allow the winter crops to be sown; and, if the rain had not then fallen, the rice in reserve would have been urgently required. It must not be forgotten that on previous occasions it has occurred that a second year of drought has followed the first.

19. The food-supplies of India, including British Burma, proved amply sufficient to meet the demand occasioned by the failure of the rice crop. Out of the total quantity of grain purchased by the Government, which amounted to 479,696 tons, only 54,300 tons were obtained from beyond British India. The rice exported from British Burma in the year 1874 amounted to about 815,000 tons. Of this quantity about 290,000 tons were sent to Bengal, and about 470,000 tons to Europe,—the exports to Europe having been only 33,000 tons less than in the previous year. The import of food-grains by railway from the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab is calculated by Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor to have amounted to 289,000 tons. This large export from Upper India did not greatly affect prices in the producing districts. The total quantity of food-grain carried into the distressed districts can hardly have been much less than 1,000,000 tons.

20. Great advantage was derived from the arrangement made to reduce at once the rates for the carriage of grain by railway, the difference being paid to the Railway Companies by the Government. The effect of this measure was to stimulate the importation of grain by railway into the distressed districts; but, owing to the great distances to be traversed and the necessity to traders of quick conveyance in order to secure the profit offered by the rise of prices, this advantage given to the railways did not materially injure the river trade, which is slow, and, moving in regular course, does not readily adapt itself to a sudden demand.

21. The statistics of the foreign trade in food-grain for the year show that the reasons for which Government determined not to prohibit the export of food-grain, either in whole or in part, were sound. Notwithstanding the home demand, the exports of food-grain from India, including British Burma, were considerable. The return of the quantities of food-grains exported by sea from Bengal during the year ending on September 30th, 1874, shows that the exports were diminished by about one-half owing to the rise of prices. The exports of rice fell from 410,712 tons in 1872-73 to 217,355 tons in 1873-74, of which 121,065 tons were sent to the Colonies and other places to which Natives of India have emigrated, and where, according to official representations which have been received in the course of the year, great evils must have resulted if the usual sources of supply had been suddenly interfered with. Of the remainder, 29,968 tons consisted of the finer descriptions of rice, which are not consumed by the poorer classes. The residue only amounted to 66,332 tons, and thus no bad effects can have followed from an adherence to sound principles, while the foreign trade has been preserved from a shock from which it might not have easily recovered.

6. EXTRA SUPPLEMENT TO THE GAZETTE OF INDIA, FEBRUARY 26, 1875.

22. Some representations were made, urging interference with the distribution of grain between different parts of Bengal. All action, direct or indirect, in this direction was prohibited, and the result of leaving supplies to be adjusted according to the demand has been that prices were equalised in a remarkable manner throughout the whole of Bengal: the effects of the scarcity were thus spread over a large area, and, therefore, were less severely felt in those parts which otherwise would have been most seriously affected. The only exception to this was in Orissa, where, probably owing to the deficiency of the means of communication, the price of rice was, during the whole period, very much lower than elsewhere, notwithstanding a considerable export.

23. The supplies purchased by Government were drawn mainly from sources at a distance from the scene of the scarcity. It was found better to buy by private arrangement with merchants, rather than that the Government should appear openly in the market. The limited experiments made in the latter direction showed that the public action of the Government produced an effect upon prices quite out of proportion to the actual amount of the transactions.

24. The facility with which large supplies of rice were imported from British Burma without any excessive rise of freights proved the value of the arrangements made with the British India Steam Navigation Company whose ships were largely engaged in the operation, as well as the great resources for purposes of transport which are afforded by the magnificent mercantile steam fleet trading to Calcutta. It was also satisfactory to find that the private firm which took the contract for landing the rice in Calcutta were able to carry through a business of considerable difficulty without any check from first to last. The traffic arrangements of the East Indian Railway Company showed the power of the Company to meet the strain of a very large additional traffic within a limited time. It is not too much to say that the relief operations could not have been successful, had it not been for the trunk line of railway which, passing through Behar, unites Calcutta with the Punjab. An additional proof has thus been afforded of the wisdom of the measures for railway construction in India which were commenced by the Marquis of Dalhousie, and have since been steadily prosecuted.

25. The manner in which the grain was conveyed from the railways to the places where it was required has afforded a remarkable instance of the great resources of the country in wheeled conveyance, and of the facility with which they may be brought to bear by the offer of profitable rates of hire. The Government of India entirely approved of the contracts made, at Sir Richard Temple's recommendation, for the transport of rice to North Behar. The cost was great, but the danger was not exaggerated. The immediate superintendence of the transport, when it assumed its full dimensions, was entrusted to Officers of the Army, and the manner in which this duty was performed shows the confidence which may be placed in the efficiency with which such transport would, if necessary, be brought to bear upon military operations.

26. The vast business of distributing relief was most successfully carried on by minutely sub-dividing the country to be dealt with in accordance with its requirements, maintaining the same organization throughout, and leaving great discretion to the Officers in local charge, after the main principles by which they were to be guided were laid down. In carrying out this work, Sir Richard Temple reports that the services of the Native Officers of the Army were found to be particularly useful.

27. The Central Relief Committee, who undertook the duty of distributing the subscriptions which were raised in India and elsewhere for

the relief of the sufferers from the scarcity, have not yet closed their accounts; but their reports, published from time to time, show that the appeal which was made to the liberality of the public has been promptly and liberally answered. The Secretary of State has already taken occasion to express to the Lord Mayor of London the value which is attached by the Government of India to the sympathy exhibited by the people of England towards the sufferers in India, not only on account of the material help which has been afforded, but also because its effect has been to strengthen the bonds of union between Her Majesty's subjects in England and in India. The Princes and Chiefs of India have distinguished themselves by the alacrity with which they have contributed; and liberal subscriptions have been received from all parts of British India, especially from Zemindars and landholders in the distressed districts. The Government of India are satisfied that the assistance which has been bestowed is gratefully acknowledged by those who have benefitted by it, and they desire to take this opportunity of expressing the sincere thanks of the people to all those who have generously contributed to the Famine Relief Fund.

28. The Government of India have already from time to time expressed their approbation of the conduct of some of the Officers of Government and others who have been engaged in the relief operations. The services rendered by Sir George Campbell during the time that he held the office of Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal were acknowledged in April last. The thanks of the Government of India have been conveyed to Mr. Ashley Eden, the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, for the able and successful manner in which the purchases of rice were made under his directions. The Viceroy has taken advantage of the opportunity of addresses which have been presented to him during his visit to Behar and in Calcutta to convey the thanks of the Government of India to the Zemindars and other gentlemen who have rendered active and valuable aid to their neighbours and fellow-countrymen. The Government of India now desire to express their entire concurrence with the Minutes published by Sir Richard Temple, in which he has tendered, in suitable terms, the thanks of the Government of Bengal to the Commissioners and other Officers of Government, civil and military, as well as to the Zemindars and all others who have assisted in different capacities during the time of scarcity. The Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces and the Chief Commissioner of Oudh have been requested to accept themselves, and to convey to those who have done good service in those Provinces, the thanks of the Government of India.

29. Early in the month of March of last year, when the pressure of the distress had begun to be felt, but the power to deal with it successfully had not yet been proved, the Government of India expressed their confidence that the Officers engaged upon the relief operations "would perform the arduous task imposed upon them with the zeal, ability, and self-sacrifice which had always distinguished the servants of the Crown and of the East India Company in times of difficulty and danger." This confidence has been entirely justified by the result, and another signal proof of the high qualities of the Civil and Military Services has been afforded by the manner in which their duty has been performed during the past year. His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, who has given every assistance in his power to the Government of Bengal, will be requested to convey to those Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Men under His Excellency's command who have been employed in the distressed districts the thanks which Sir Richard Temple has expressed in his Minute of the 24th of November. Similar communications will be made through the proper channels to those who are serving under Local Governments or Departments.

30. The Government of India desire, in conclusion, to convey to Sir Richard Temple their recognition of the distinguished services which he has rendered to the people of Bengal and Behar during the time of difficulty through which the Province has passed. As a Member of the Council of the Governor General, Sir Richard Temple was from the first intimately associated with the policy adopted by the Government of India in respect to the scarcity. He took a prominent part in carrying that policy into effect under Sir George Campbell's administration; and, since he assumed the office of Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in April last, he has unremittingly devoted himself to the personal direction and superintendence of the relief operations, which owe their complete success mainly to his exertions.

ORDER.—Ordered, that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the  
Madras. Central Provinces. Government of Bengal, and to the Local  
Bombay. Burma.  
N. W. Provinces. Mysore and Coorg. Governments and Administrations noted  
Punjab. Ajmere.  
Oudh. Assam. in the margin.

Ordered also, that the Resolution be published in the *Gazette of India*.

#### MINUTE

BY

THE HON'BLE SIR RICHARD TEMPLE, K.C.S.I.,

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF BENGAL,

Dated the 31st October 1874.

#### PREFACE.

The letter of the 3rd October 1874 from the Government of India conveyed a request that a general report on the famine in Bengal and Behar during 1874 may be prepared by the Government of Bengal at the end of October of this year (1874), or as soon after as may be conveniently practicable. In compliance with this request, I make the following report.

The subject seems to me to divide itself into six parts, which will be treated of in successive chapters, namely,—

1st.—The origin and manifestation of the calamity; the principles on which the Government determined to meet it; the general plan of operations; and the preliminary instructions issued for that end.

2nd.—The measures adopted in detail for carrying those principles and instructions into effect according to the development of affairs.

3rd.—The statistics of the estimated extent and character of the calamity, and of the means employed by the Government to avert the consequences, together with the estimated expense of the undertaking.

4th.—The progress of the relief operations from the setting in of the famine to its culminating point, the actual result being compared with the estimate.

5th.—The gradual decline of the famine until its ultimate extinction, and the diminution of the relief operations until their cessation.

6th.—General considerations relating to the circumstances described in the previous chapters.

## CHAPTER I.

THE cause of the events which occurred in 1874 must be sought for in the scantiness of the rains in 1873 throughout Bengal and Behar. This cause did not operate in Orissa, which consequently escaped misfortune.

In Bengal and Behar, after a season of extraordinary heat during May and June of 1873, the rain did not begin till late, that is in July, and even then was scanty. It lasted more or less, but never abundantly, till the end of August, when it for the most part ceased prematurely. Enough had, however, fallen to secure a fair yield of the crops which are reaped in August and September. Little or none fell during the months of September, October, and November, that is during the whole autumnal season, when heavy showers are indispensable for insuring the maturity of the rice crop of December (the most important of all the crops), and for sowing the crops which are to be reaped in the following spring. As experience shewed that the consequences of drought are sometimes averted by rain even at the last moment, hope was not abandoned till the end of October. Not till then could it be seen whether the apprehension of failure of the crops would be realised or not. By that time, however, it became certain that widespread and heavy loss must occur in the December crops; that the sowing of the spring crop must be short; and that the germinating and growing of what had been sown must be jeopardised. The injury to the December rice harvest was almost irreparable. The injury to the young spring crops might yet be repaired, if rain should fall between the end of December and the beginning of February. Fear was chiefly felt for Behar and for the north part of Bengal, but largely also for all the rest of Bengal—save the eastern part in the basin of the Brahmapootra, and the deltaic region in the south which depends on inundation rather than on rainfall.

On the other hand, it had been ascertained that the September rice crop of Bengal and the August maize and coarser grains of Behar had produced an average yield, sufficient to sustain the people till at least the middle of winter.

Early in October the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir George Campbell, had expressed his fear that the drought of September must cause serious scarcity, and had instituted inquiries in every district regarding the actual outturn of the autumn food crops and the apparent promise of the winter crops. On the 22nd October he reported to the Government of India that, owing to the shortness and early cessation of the rains, there was the gravest apprehension of general scarcity throughout the country, and of worse evils in some parts of Behar and north Bengal.

On the 7th November the Governor-General (who had proceeded to Calcutta,) issued a resolution in which the fundamental principles for dealing with the threatened calamity were embodied, namely,—that in circumstances where numbers of persons may be exposed to danger of starvation or to disease from want of food, the Government and its officers should do their utmost to apply the most effectual remedy that might be practicable,—that interference with the trade in grain should be avoided, so far and so long as such avoidance might be possible,—that the Government should afford some facilities for the transport of grain to distressed territories through the energy and enterprise of traders, such

as the reduction of rates on the guaranteed railways,—that public works both imperial and local should be commenced or prosecuted with a view of giving employment to those who might need it,—that wages to the people thus employed should be paid in food-grain wherever desirable or convenient,—that accordingly supplies of food grain should be purchased and laid in by Government,—that the undertaking of public improvements by corporations or other bodies, and of agricultural improvements by individuals, should be encouraged by loans from the public treasury,—that advances of money should be made by Government to private gentlemen, European and Native, who would undertake to import grain from a distance and distribute it at prices to be regulated according to the circumstances of the case,—that wherever and whenever the distress might become severe, the Government should assist in the organisation of a system of relief,—that a central committee should be formed for administering the funds for relief received from private sources, and also if required, the funds received from Government,—that relief committees should be established in the interior of the districts to distribute assistance to the distressed in cash or grain, or prepared food,—that co-operation for the work of relief should be afforded by the commissariat, the medical department, and other branches of the public service,—that emigration from the populous tracts visited or threatened by distress should be encouraged by the Government,—that as the season progressed, advances of money for purchase of seed-grain should be made by the Government to landlords or tenants,—that periodically at short intervals information should be published regarding the state and prospects of the crops, the stock of food, the public works in progress, the relief operations, and all other circumstances relating to the scarcity.

The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who had, during the last days of October, visited the Patna and Bhagulpore divisions, proceeded to give effect to these principles by notifying the tracts in which failure of crops had occurred and scarcity of different degrees was expected; by removing tolls from ferries and roads along the chief routes for grain transport; by issuing instructions to help *bond fide* importers of grain with loans of money without interest; by directing the immediate commencement of a number of relief works and the completion of preliminaries for many more; by intimating that wages to labourers might begin to be paid in grain whenever the local price of grain reached something like famine rates; by ordering store-houses for Government grain to be at once constructed on all the chief works; by effecting locally, in the less distressed parts of Bengal, moderate purchases of grain; by despatching the grain so purchased by railway to the distressed districts and so drawing out the means of local transport; by organising and testing the strength of local carriage of the country (mostly bullock carts but partly river boats), and choosing the best routes for transport of Government grain; by prescribing the selection of sites for granaries, relief-houses and relief committees suited to meet different grades of distress; by giving a large money credit from which local officers might make advances to persons who would undertake useful works for embankment, drainage, water-supply and other local improvements; by granting special concessions and privileges to persons who might take such advances; by sanctioning the organisation of such establishments, and preparation of such appliances, as might be required for the transport and custody of grain, for relief works, or for the distribution of charitable relief; and by defining the points on which local officers were to furnish fortnightly reports on the condition of the districts and the people under their care.

The Government of India authorised the vigorous prosecution, under the orders of the Government of Bengal, of the works of the Soane canal and its branches; the construction of embankments on either side of the river Gunduk; the commencement of the Northern Bengal State Railway—all which works would afford employment to those in need.

The opinion of the Government regarding the probable severity of the distress was based mainly on the reports of the local officers, who had made

careful inquiries throughout their districts. But there were not wanting indications that the people themselves, and especially the more intelligent landholders and residents in the interior of the country, had the gravest fears in respect to the impending crisis. The British Indian Association of Calcutta, a society which is mainly composed of the zemindars and landholders of Bengal, early in December represented to the Government their expectation that the famine of 1874 would be more severe and general than the famine of 1866; that special organisation would be required to bring relief to respectable villagers who would not beg and could not work; and that, if the worst came, the task of feeding sixty millions of people might, as an extreme possibility, devolve on the Government. Looking to the position of the Association and their sources of information, the Government deemed their opinion entitled to weight, and invited a fuller statement of the grounds for that opinion. The Association replied on the 24th December by submitting a valuable essay, stating the facts as they believed them to be, offering a full estimate of the position apparently warranted by those facts, and comparing in detail the prospects of the country in December 1865 with the prospects in December 1873. The Association's statement of facts coincided closely with the official reports already before the Government and the public. The important inferences which they drew were that the outturn of the food crops of 1873-74 over the whole of Bengal could hardly exceed two-fifths of the yield of an average year; that the stocks in the hands of the people, together with the December and April crops, would only suffice for six months' consumption for the whole of Bengal; and that widespread suffering and starvation could "be averted only by pouring in "grain into the country sufficient, at any rate, for a three months' supply." The Association contemplated three months' supply for the sixty millions of souls in Bengal outside Assam and Orissa—or, in other words, the importation of 3,750,000 tons of grain. This extreme demand (practically beyond the possibility of supply) was doubtless meant to be hypothetical. But the representations made by the Association show that the most intelligent and the best informed among the native landholders apprehended a calamitous famine unless the Government should step in to help or save the people.

In view of preventing any diminution of the general food-supply of the country, the Government of Bengal proposed that the exportation of food-grains should be prohibited. The Government of India did not accede to this proposal, believing that the supposed advantages of the measure were uncertain, while its disadvantages were certain and serious.

There was a good hope that supplies of food would be sent in ordinary course of trade to central and northern Bengal and to Behar from Orissa, from Chittagong, and especially from the district of Backergunge, which comprises the combined delta of the Ganges and the Brahmapootra, which ordinarily has a large surplus of rice for exportation, and which had providentially not suffered at all from drought,—and from parts of northern, north-western, and central India. As to northern India, there seemed to be justification for this hope, notwithstanding that those portions of the North-Western Provinces and of Oude which adjoin Behar were also suffering from drought, though in a much less degree than Behar itself. In order to encourage and facilitate the transport of grain to Behar and Bengal from other parts of India, the guaranteed railway companies were authorised to reduce by one-half the rates on the carriage of grain, the loss to be made up by the Government.

As regards the grain to be supplied by the State, it was decided that, while purchases to a limited amount (50,000 tons) might be made in Bengal itself, and in the North-Western Provinces by order of the Government of Bengal, all further State requirements must be met by purchases beyond the limits of the failure of the crops in Bengal and Behar, principally in the Madras Presidency, in British Burmah, in Saigon, in Chittagong, made under the direct order of the Government of India. The principle was this, that if very extensive purchases of grain by the State should be needed, they ought to be made in places which were distant from the scene of drought and scarcity, and

from which supplies of food-grain could not be expected in the course of trade. By these means interference on the part of Government in the inland grain trade of India would as far as possible be avoided, and the quantity of grain within Bengal and Behar would be *pro tanto* augmented. In the event of the importation of grain by Government becoming extraordinarily large, reliance was mainly placed on British Burmah, where the rice harvest was known to promise well.

The Government of Bengal, on the 2nd December, reported that 70,000 tons of grain, estimated to be equal to three months' supply of food-grain for 5 per cent. of the population of the distressed districts of Behar and northern Bengal, should be stored by the State in those districts by the end of January 1874 as a preliminary measure, but deferred stating the amount which might probably be required in addition until the result should be known of the rain expected to fall some time after the end of December. The Government of India immediately approved the preliminary measure. At the same time arrangements were made for the purchase of large additional quantities in British Burmah in the event of their being needed.

During the month of December the fears regarding the winter rice crop in Bengal and Behar were realised. In Behar and northern Bengal the rice harvest yielded less than one-third of the average produce, and in central Bengal about one-half. Up to the beginning of January no rain fell, nor was there prospect of any falling. The spring crops, which are considerable in Behar (though inconsiderable in Bengal), had sprung up fairly well; but would probably be lost for the most part if the winter rains should finally fail. Under these circumstances the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (Sir George Campbell) reported that 75,000 tons more should be placed in the distressed districts as soon as possible, and a large reserve provided in addition for despatch to those districts, according as need might arise. The Government of India had already taken preliminary measures to secure sufficient supplies. The arrangements prepared in British Burmah were concluded; the purchases were settled; and the vessels of the British India Steam Navigation Company were chartered to convey the cargoes of rice according to dates specified. The Government of India further undertook to store in Calcutta the grain brought from beyond sea, and to make over to the Government of Bengal in Calcutta such quantities as it might day by day require for despatch by the "East Indian" and the "Eastern Bengal" railways to the distressed districts.

Thus to the Government of India pertained the task of directing the purchase of the grain from beyond sea, of transporting it to Calcutta, of storing it there. To the Government of Bengal pertained the task of despatching the grain by rail to the frontiers of the distressed districts, of transporting it from the several railway stations to the numerous scenes of distress, and of distributing it among the people.

The first efforts to promote emigration from distressed tracts to the tea districts showed that Government could not interpose in this business save at great cost and with small immediate result. The attempt was therefore abandoned, and the recruiting grounds were, so far as the tea districts were concerned, left clear for the operations of private emigration agents. Towards the end of January 1874 the Government of India made a grant of £50,000 to form a fund for the promotion of emigration to British Burmah, where the population is sparse and an excellent field exists for labour. The Magistrates of distressed districts were directed to act during the season of distress as agents for the engagement of persons willing to emigrate to Burmah, and were to arrange for their despatch to Calcutta, where the Superintendent of emigrants would provide passages to Burmah by the return voyages of steamers which brought Government grain from Burmah to Bengal. It will be seen hereafter that the number of these emigrants, though doubtless an acceptable addition to the strength of the districts where the people were settled, was not enough to make any impression on the aggregate population of the distressed districts.

During January (1874) it became apparent that while the aggregate of loss and of distress in Behar and Bengal would be equal to the worst anticipations, the scarcity would be unequal in its incidence; in other words, the scarcity would be intense and absolute in many extensive tracts, while in others it would be mitigated from various causes. This consideration rendered it necessary to develop some of the principles which had been first laid down for the management of relief. The constitution of the central relief committee and the various district committees was proceeded with. But it became clear that in the extremely distressed tracts, where the whole power of the Government would have to be exerted in order to save the people, the functions of the relief committees would, in practice, merge in the duties of the civil officers. In such tracts the necessity, which had been foreseen from the first, of supplying Government grain to the public when food might not be procurable through the agency of trade, assumed a practical shape. The rule also, which had been originated by the Governor-General in December, began to take shape, to the effect that under such circumstances food-grain might be advanced by the State through the district Collectors to the cultivators of the land, to be repaid without interest after future harvests.

Instructions for the organisation and guidance of relief committees were, after a conference with the Government of Bengal, approved by the Government of India on the 26th January. These rules gave the local authorities power—to establish relief committees and sub-committees in any number and to any extent that might be necessary,—to elaborate this organization of relief to such a degree that all the operations should be inspected once a week at the least,—to arrange that supplies should be regularly distributed in every village where severe distress might exist, so that the congregation of persons for relief at a distance from their homes might be prevented,—to transport food to convenient places for the above purposes and to provide for its storage,—to distribute gratuitous relief to persons needing it and unable to work,—to afford useful employment for those who wanted it,—to provide specially for those whose condition, caste, or usage, precluded them from applying for ordinary relief, but who would be in danger of starvation if not relieved,—to sell Government grain to the public where a serious deficiency in the supply of food might be apprehended, the price of the grain was to be regulated by that of the nearest large mart accessible by rail or river, the sale to be stopped as soon as the local trade might receive supplies, and any competition with such trade to be carefully avoided.

The Government invited the zemindars (landholders) of Bengal and Behar to co-operate in the work of relief either by postponing the collection of rent or by opening relief works, or by making advances of money or food to their tenants. Inasmuch as heavy expenditure of this kind might sometimes make it difficult for zemindars to pay the Government land revenue, discretion was given to the Collectors to postpone the collection of the Government revenue from any landholders who might distinguish themselves by employing labour on land improvements, or by importing grain for distribution, or by sustaining their tenants during the season of difficulty.

As January advanced without sign of rain, anxiety was more and more widely felt. But during the last week of that month heavy showers began to fall in southern Bengal, and rain gradually reached the northern and most distressed districts. These rains caused considerable reduction and contraction of the danger.

Before the end of January the extent and incidence of the scarcity and distress became more and more discernible. As regards Behar, irrigation from the unfinished channels of the Sone Canal had saved the rice and spring crops on 159,500 acres in the districts of Shahabad, Gya, and Patna. The important spring crops were growing well in the basin of the rivers Ganges and Gunduk, in the south of the districts of Tirhoot, of Monghyr, of Bhagalpore, of Purneah; in the tracts south of the Ganges, including the districts of Patna, Shahabad, and Gya—territories having a total population of seven millions—for all which apprehension had been originally felt. In these tracts there was a fair hope that scarcity would not arrive at all, or, if it did come, would be much mitigated.

On the other hand, the realisation of even more than the original apprehensions was threatened in the upper or northern and central parts of the districts of Sarun, Chumparun, Tirhoot, Bhagulpore and Purneah,—in eastern Tirhoot also,—in parts of Sonthalia,—territories having a total population of nine millions. In these tracts the main crop, the December rice, had failed, and there were no spring crops adequate to sustain the people. Here, then, was the prospect of dearth of food for several months; and these were the very places least accessible to trade and least likely to receive succour from that source. This prospect was further darkened by the probability of the conterminous tracts of Nepaul being similarly affected. As regards northern Bengal, in the tracts along the left bank of the Ganges and of the Brahmapootra, and in the tracts lying under the Himalayan range, either the December crops had been partly saved or the spring crops were growing well. These tracts comprised large portions of the districts of Maldah, Rajshahye, Pubna, Bogra, Rungpore, and Dinagepore, in all which there was fair hope that scarcity might not arise save in a mitigated form. On the other hand, the winter rice had been lost, and there were no spring crops growing in extensive portions of the districts of Dinagepore and Rungpore, also in some parts of Maldah, Rajshahye, and Bogra—tracts containing a total population of three millions. Here again was the prospect of severe and protracted scarcity. Moreover most of these places had little or no chance of receiving succour from trade.

Extreme failure of the chief food-crop in so many parts of Bengal was the more disastrous, in that the population of these districts was dense, ranging from 778 to 229 persons to the square mile, and averaging fully 500 persons to the square mile over the whole area.

As regards the remainder of the provinces under the Government of Bengal, the December rice harvest had been good nowhere save in Backergunge and Orissa; it had been only moderate in Eastern Bengal; it had been indifferent in Central Bengal and in the Chota Nagpore country; it had been bad in parts of some districts, namely Burdwan, Beerbboom, Bankoora, Moorshedabad, Nuddea, Manbboom. The aggregate population of these last-named districts amounted to seven-and-a-half millions.

Further, the scarcity and high prices prevailing in the adjacent parts of Oude and the North-Western Provinces had to be remembered.

The geographical area of extreme scarcity may be described in general terms as extending from the foot of the Himalaya along the frontier of Nepaul, Sikkim, and Bhootan on the north to the river Ganges on the south, and from the river Gunduk on the west to the river Brahmapootra on the east. The area enclosed by the hills and these three rivers is about 330 miles long and, on an average, about 90 miles broad. The distressed tracts of Sarun, situated between the Gunduk and the Gogra, and of Burdwan, Moorshedabad, Chota Nagpore, and Sonthalia, lie outside and apart from this area.

The prices of rice in Bengal generally, and in Behar particularly, had been rising gradually since the middle of October; they had slightly rallied in December as the gathering of the winter harvest brought in some supplies; but they were rising again in January, by the end of which month they were twice as dear as in ordinary years. Where the ordinary rate at this season would be 28<sup>\*</sup> seers for the rupee, the rate was 14 or 15 seers; where the ordinary rate would be 25 seers, the rate was 12 or 13 seers. With the exception of Orissa and Chittagong, those districts which had gathered a fair, though far from abundant, harvest, such as Backergunge, Dacca, Tipperah, also showed high prices, caused by exportation of their spare supplies, or by the anticipation of future demands.

It was the shortness of the harvest, the scantiness of food-supply, the tightness of the grain market, the dearness of prices, in Bengal generally and in all the neighbouring territories, which aggravated the danger of the extremely distressed tracts, enhanced the probability of the scarcity in them deepening into famine, deprived them of the natural and normal succour from trade, and threatened to leave them almost without any resource save the extraneous help that might be afforded by the Government.

\* A seer is equal to about two pounds avoirdupois.

In this chapter the narrative has followed affairs to the last week of January. The general character and proportions of the calamity had then declared themselves. The plan of operations for meeting it had been settled; the principles to be borne in mind had been announced; the instructions regarding the procedure had been given. In the next chapter the narrative will shew how all these principles, rules, and orders, were carried into effect according to the development and progress of the scarcity.

## CHAPTER II.

I HAVE here to explain my own connection with the relief operations. Until nearly the end of January I had been Financial Member of the Governor-General's Council, and had been also in charge (under the Governor-General's direction and control) of the business relating to scarcity and relief which had to be disposed of by the Government of India. On the 21st January I was, with the concurrence of Sir George Campbell, associated with the Government of Bengal and deputed to visit the distressed districts, with full powers to direct the relief operations under the rules laid down by the Governments of India and Bengal, reporting my proceedings to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. I remained on this deputation until the 8th April, when I assumed charge of the Government of Bengal from Sir George Campbell, who had been obliged, under medical advice, to resign charge of duties which he had discharged under failing health with devoted disregard of his own safety. From the end of January, then, my own proceedings form part of the general work of the Government of Bengal, there being entire accord between Sir George Campbell and me.

It should be added that, between the 8th and the 20th March, Sir George Campbell visited Tirhoot and spent several days at Durbhunga, the most important centre of distress in the most distressed district, expediting the local arrangements, perfecting the relief organization which had been set on foot, elaborating the orders and instructions in all details, dealing personally with the first outbreaks of actual famine, and encouraging both the people and the officers by his example. After this visit he recorded an exhaustive minute on the manner in which relief on a large scale should be conducted, which has proved of the utmost practical value to all engaged in carrying on the work.

In the situation, as explained in Chapter I, at the end of January, then, it became necessary, firstly, to make the final estimate of the distress to be anticipated in, and the Government grain to be allotted to each district, according to the latest information; secondly, to complete the arrangements for the transport by country carriage of the grain allotted to the various localities; thirdly, to propose to the Government of Bengal the precise organization and the scale of establishments for the distribution of relief in each locality. For these purposes I travelled through the distressed districts, conferring with the local authorities and with the natives on the spot. From time to time I reported to the Government of Bengal the orders given by me in each district and the arrangements proposed. The allotments of grain then recommended by me and accepted by the Government exceeded for most of the districts the quantities which had been at first determined provisionally. But the sum total of my recommendations for the districts alone, agreed closely with the aggregate already recommended by the Government of Bengal, including both the present supply and a reserve.

The estimates which formed the basis of the allotments were made in this wise. In each district the area over which the crops had failed and the proportion of the average produce which had failed (two-thirds, one-half, one-third, one-quarter, as the case might be) were ascertained. The population of the area thus affected was known from the census tables. The effect of the ascertained failure and loss upon the population was estimated in conference with the local officers and the natives, and was represented by a certain percentage on the population expected to require assistance in some shape or other from Government. The percentages in the various localities varied much, even in the most distressed districts, according to circumstances, from 15 to 75 per cent. In the majority of cases these calculations have been verified by the

event, which attests the value and accuracy of the information collected by the local officers from the time when the misfortune began to threaten the country. Further, the estimates gave the numbers of persons expected to require relief during the several stages of the distress—during its beginning, its height, and its decline, showing how they would gradually rise till they attained the anticipated maximum, and how they would decrease down to the minimum. In other words, these numbers were estimated for the initiatory period, when the distress would be gradually increasing; for the middle period, when it would be culminating; and for the latter period, when it would be declining, until its disappearance. The persons requiring assistance from Government included all those who would take such assistance in its several categories, namely, (I), gratuitous relief, (II), employment on relief works, (III), purchase of grain, (IV), advance of grain for subsistence or for seed. According to the estimated number of persons the quantity of grain was determined, at the rate of three-quarters of a seer, or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. per head per diem, for the periods specified. Thus the amount proposed for the total allotment of Government grain for each district singly, and for the whole country collectively, was obtained. These estimates, then, were founded on actual data the best available at the time.

The distress was expected to begin in March, to go on increasing till July, then to begin decreasing slightly till September, to decrease fast in September and October, to vanish generally in November, but to last till the end of December in some parts of north Behar, especially north-east Tirhoot, where comparatively little reliance is usually placed on the autumn crop, and where consequently the people would not receive adequate supplies from a new crop until the winter.

This rate ( $\frac{3}{4}$  of a seer or about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. per head for men, women, and children) at which grain should be provided was assumed after due consideration and discussion. The lowest diet provided in Bengal jails for non-labouring prisoners is equal to about 1 seer or 2 lbs. The ordinary diet of a labouring adult in Bengal is taken, after statistical enquiry, to be 1 seer of rice besides  $\frac{1}{4}$  seer (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb.) of fish, pulse, pepper, or other condiments. The diet prescribed for adult Bengalee emigrants on ship-board and for Bengalee sailors always exceeds 1 seer a day in total weight, and in some cases it reaches 2 seers a day. Many of the poor people for whom grain was to be provided would be labouring hard on relief works during inclement and exhausting weather. Nearly the whole of the Government provision of grain consisted of rice, which contains less strength-giving qualities than wheat and some other grains. It was known that each bag of the expected consignments of Burmah rice would contain from 8 to 20 per cent. of innutritious husk. In view of all these considerations I framed my estimates of total requirements on the basis that each person to be relieved would on the average require  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a seer ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. of grain) a day. In practice it was found that even to ordinary paupers, who did not do any work, local committees had to give  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a seer of rice daily besides one pice ( $\frac{3}{8}$  of a penny) for the purchase of salt and condiments; to women in delicate health and to persons reduced by previous hunger a still larger daily dole had to be allowed.

Being responsible for the general character of these estimates, I feel bound to record my tribute to the utility of the census which had been carried out two years previously under Sir George Campbell—the first regular census which had ever been taken in Bengal. If the success of the prescribed plan of relief operations has in any degree depended on the framing of estimates, if these estimates have in any degree enabled the Government to make a proper forecast of the supplies, and the resources necessary to encounter the crisis, then it is to be remembered that these estimates could never have been framed had not that census existed.

The difficulties of Government with respect to the scarcity were not wholly confined to British territory and British subjects. The strip of Nepal territory, known as the Terai, lying between the Himalaya and the distressed British districts, a rice-growing tract, had been afflicted by failure of the rains. It was anticipated by the Nepal authorities that consequent distress might affect from one quarter to half a million Nepalese subjects across

our border. Our officers were instructed that distressed Nepalese must be employed at our relief works, relieved at our hospitals and relief centres, and served at our granaries, precisely in the same way as British subjects. And it was arranged, with the consent of the Government of India, that 1,000 tons of Government grain should be made over at a moderate price to the Nepal authorities for distribution to their distressed subjects. Throughout the season, Nepalese were among the largest purchasers of grain at the Government granaries along the border. The Nepal officials found difficulty in carrying their grain across British districts from the railway stations on the Ganges, and accordingly our officers at Bhaugulpore transported the 1,000 tons of grain to the border and made it over there to agents of the Nepal Government. I am enabled to state that the Minister of Nepal, Sir Jung Bahadur, G.C.S.I., expressed to the Viceroy the grateful acknowledgments of his Government for the assistance rendered.

On the completion of the estimates in each district the arrangements were revised for the conveyance of the grain from the railway stations to the places of distribution. The amounts of carriage, either already employed or required in addition, were considered. In determining the transport arrangements the object aimed at was this, that all the amounts allotted should be carried to their respective destinations in the interior of the country before the setting-in of the rains by the middle of June. In this way the risks of the transport along roads heavy from rain would be avoided. Also, in the event of unforeseen additional quantities having to be carried, there would still be time during the rainy season to arrange some transport by water routes. For every reason it was expedient to be beforehand with so vital, and yet so arduous, a matter as the inland transit. No effort was spared by the local officers to provide the required amounts of country carriage by carts and bullocks, by pack animals, by boats, for the conveyance of the large quantities of grain which had been allotted.

The boats were used chiefly in northern Bengal. In the beginning of November the navigable routes in that quarter had been tested with the view of transporting grain, as the navigation becomes uncertain after autumn. And boats began to ply during the winter on each river as soon as its suitability was established. With this water transport there was combined land transport by country carriage. This carriage was obtained by direct agency, or with the help of petty native contractors, for hire not more than fifty per cent. above the rates of ordinary times. So far no serious difficulty was encountered.

In Behar, however, there were no water routes practicable at that season, and the difficulty of procuring sufficient land carriage was extreme. During December and January the local officers strove to obtain this carriage, by direct agency without help of large contractors, at hire little above the rates of ordinary times. In this way a considerable amount of carriage was laboriously collected, but that amount proved quite insufficient. The demand had become so extraordinarily large as to require not only all the carts and bullocks ordinarily available for hire, but also all those which might exist for use in other kinds of work. Consequently the rates of hire rapidly rose. Still our officers hesitated to allow the enhanced price, and persevered in their endeavours to procure the carriage. This process had an unfavorable effect on a people proverbially jealous regarding the collection of carriage, and they resolutely refused to give their carts and bullocks on the terms hitherto allowed. It was evident that unless some additional inducement were immediately offered, considerable failure in the land transport must ensue, which failure must cripple the relief of distress. There was no remedy but to abandon the direct agency which could not be rendered successful, and to substitute the employment of contractors, men of substance and influence, to produce the required amount of carriage. The contractors, chiefly European gentlemen, indigo planters, and landholders, possessed exclusively advantages of a special kind. In Behar, the indigo planters are always landholders, and this circumstance alone secured to them a large command of carriage. But the indigo industry also employs a great number of carts (probably 20,000 to 30,000) which are the property of the villagers, but are under engagements to serve the factories whenever called out for service. The planters therefore had a power of collecting carriage such as



February and March. This gave employment to at least 120,000 men drawn from the distressed districts, and in itself constituted an important relief work.

Before the grain could be lifted by the country carriage as above described, it had to be carried across a great river, the Ganges. This obstacle in *limine* was overcome by the establishment of steam ferries at the requisite points along the river. For this purpose all the steamers of the Bengal Marine were employed, and many vessels of the India General Steam Navigation Company were chartered. Depôts with yards and enclosures covering many acres were formed on the river banks.

The East Indian Railway actually touched the Ganges at the city of Patna. But special sidings had to be made from the Futwah ghât and Barh stations, whereby grain waggons could be run down to the river's edge. The Barh riverside station supplied the Durbhunga railway and the eastern Tirhoot transport companies. From the Futwah riverside station were ferried across to Bunkar ghât (opposite Patna) the supplies for western and central Tirhoot, for Chumparun, and Sarun. The Patna ghât (riverside) station was left entirely for private traffic. The special sidings, which were put down with much promptitude by the East Indian Railway Company's engineers, were of great use to the transport department, and also to the engineers of the Durbhunga railway. The origin and purpose of the Durbhunga railway will be explained presently.

A large staff of officers, drawn from the Quarter-Master-General's department and from all sections of the Army, was organized to supervise all the inland transport arrangements above described, and all the transit routes. They were assisted by three companies of sappers and miners and a corps of native pioneers. They literally pioneered all the transit routes, causing obstructions to be removed, repairs to be effected, temporary bridges to be constructed, pontoons to be thrown across streams, sometimes even cutting ways across country through the fields. They guarded the springs and improved the drinking places at the halts in the march. Field hospitals for sick animals at central places were established with a complement of veterinary surgeons, in view to the contingency of murrain or epidemic sickness breaking out. The probability of cattle plague reported in Sarun was the source at one time of considerable anxiety.

As the concentration of so many thousands of cattle might prematurely exhaust even the abundant supplies of fodder which fortunately existed on the spot, large quantities of the best sorts of fodder were sent for by rail from the North-Western Provinces and were stacked at convenient places.

As already stated, the grain had to be sent by railway to the various stations on the left or south bank of the Ganges, the bulk of it coming from Calcutta, and a portion of it from the North-Western Provinces. The principal railway stations which thus became centres of activity, were Arrah for Sarun; Patna and Futwah for Chumparun and west Tirhoot; Barh for east Tirhoot; Monghyr for north Bhagulpore; Sahebgunge for Purneah; Rajmehal for Maldah and Dinagepore; Kooshtea and Goalundo for northern Bengal generally.

The Eastern Bengal Railway, having a short line and a comparatively, small quantity of Government grain to transport, did its share of the work with due punctuality. But the East Indian Railway, with a long line a heavy ordinary traffic, and a very large quantity of Government grain (two thousand tons a day) to transport, met with great difficulty in delivering the grain fast enough for the country carriage to take away. The railway Company, however, put forth every effort by procuring rolling stock from other railways and by employing temporary establishments. In the end the work was well accomplished.

Among the essential preliminaries of the administration was the placing of all the principal relief centres in telegraphic communication with the existing lines of electric telegraph. Before the famine there was not any telegraphic communication in north Behar, nor in northern Bengal (save the line to Darjeeling). In November (1873) a telegraphic line was ordered from Patna to Segowlee, near the Nepal frontier, passing through Mozafferpore (west Tirhoot) and Motiharee (Chumparun); also a telegraph along the line of the Northern

Bengal Railway through Parbuttypore, a point half way between Dinagepore and Rungpore. During February and March a temporary extension of these lines was obtained to the north-west extremities of Chumparun and of Tirhoot, and to Dinagepore and Rungpore; also sanction for temporary lines from the Ganges to Durbhunga, and north-east Tirhoot and north Bhagulpore. Thus a telegraphic connexion was established with the remote centres of the worst tracts of country. The lines were constructed with a speed and efficiency most creditable to the Indian Telegraph department. The posts were obtained from the bamboo groves so abundant in these regions. The lines were opened by March, and, despite floods and storms, were kept up through the rainy season. The numerous and important messages delivered during the relief operations were rendered with remarkable accuracy. The value of this communication as a resource in these emergent affairs is too obvious to need any description.

Next, after completing the transport arrangements and bringing all the country carriage into the field, the most urgent matter was the organizing of the relief system according to the rules of the 26th January already mentioned in Chapter I. My visits to all the most distressed tracts of country satisfied me that if relief operations were (according to those rules) to be inspected at least once a week, and if supplies were to be distributed in every severely distressed village—these tracts must be parcelled and mapped out into circles, each circle to contain from fifty to one hundred villages, to be supervised by a superior European or Native officer with a staff of subordinates, among whom would be divided the duty of inspecting all the villages, and with at least one grain depôt from which might be supplied the granaries to be established at convenient places within the circle; that, in short, the unit of relief administration must be the circle, with an organization of its own, sufficient for all branches of the relief work. The officer in charge of a circle would be the immediate executive authority and administrator of relief; to him would be entrusted the safety of the lives of the inhabitants of his circle; and of him would be demanded all the best practical qualities of a civil officer. The boundaries of the circles throughout the more distressed tracts, and the place for the head-quarters of each circle, were determined with all possible expedition. The construction of temporary habitations at these various head-quarters was taken in hand. It was expected that there would be at least one hundred and fifty such circles. The selection of circle officers of the requisite ability for so many circles was the first care. The next thought was the collecting and disposing of the circle subordinates. Each circle would need, on the average, ten inspectors for the visitation of the villages. For each inspector's sub-circle one granary would be needed (that is, ten granaries to a circle), and each granary must have a store-keeper. Then the circle officer must have store-keepers for his central depôt, and one or more native clerks. Thus each circle must have on the average twenty-five subordinates of some education and training. The number to be found for one hundred and fifty circles would be about three thousand five hundred. Besides these, which might be termed the fully organized circles in the most distressed tracts, there were to be in the less distressed districts many circles and relief centres, with a less complete organization. For these, also, many hundreds of trained officials would be required.

The circle officers and their establishments were to be entirely subordinate to the ordinary civil authority of the district, that is to the Magistrate and Collector. As regards relief operations, the Magistrate-Collectors were entirely subordinate to the ordinary Divisional Commissioners. In parts of north Behar and northern Bengal it became necessary to appoint Additional Commissioners for assisting in the work of supervision.

In the fully organized circles, the functions of relief committees and sub-committees would merge in the duties of the circle officers, though even here there was nothing to prevent these officers from associating with themselves the best non-official persons, Europeans and Natives, of all classes; and indeed, the assistance from private persons proved ultimately to be very great. In the less organized circles, there were sub-committees consisting of private persons. Often native landholders and zemindars distributed relief on behalf of the State

in addition to the charity which they dispensed from their own funds. Often also, European indigo planters acted as volunteers, or unpaid circle officers, for the villages surrounding their factories, being reimbursed by Government only for the establishments which they had to entertain for the purpose. Their permanent residence, their personal interest in the welfare of their neighbours, and their local experience, rendered them most useful and excellent coadjutors. And in all circles, whether fully, or partly organized, not only were the principal residents engaged in the work of securing the public safety, but also other classes, such as village headmen, superior ryots or cultivators, local accountants, petty traders, in short, all who by their good will or by their means, or by their personal attention were able to render aid.

In order, then, to carry out the comprehensive and searching system of relief which had been prescribed, an extraordinarily large staff of officers and officials had to be rapidly collected. The ordinary civil establishments in Bengal are economically fixed on the lowest scale consistent with efficiency, and could spare but little of their strength for extraordinary service. Therefore the men for the relief establishments had to be sought for in every direction. From the commencement, that is, in November, the Government of Bengal had been obtaining the loan of European civil officers from the North-Western Provinces, Oude, the Punjab, the Central Provinces, and the Bombay Presidency. Assistance was subsequently procured from the military staff corps and from the various branches of the Army. In the provinces under the Government of Bengal itself, all the junior civil servants, and many selected officers from the civil departments were withdrawn from their regular stations and appointed to the relief department, their places being supplied temporarily by natives. Many of the best native officials of all ranks were despatched to the scene of distress. Afterwards a strong staff of trained native officials, Deputy Collectors, Tehsildars, and others, from the North-Western Provinces (through the good co-operation of the Government of those Provinces) were sent down to Behar, and did their work there with the full degree of efficiency that was to be expected of the distinguished administrative school whence they came. Further, with the special assistance of the Commander-in-Chief, a large number of selected native officers of various grades, both of the cavalry and of the infantry, were lent to the Civil Government for the relief work. These men have by their discipline, intelligence, and trustworthiness throughout the operations, left a name behind them in all respects worthy of the service to which they belong.

As a valuable adjunct to the relief system, a special medical staff was collected. Additional medical officers, Europeans, were appointed to most of the distressed districts. In each organized relief circle there was stationed a native medical official, and a field hospital was established in special view of the contingency of a more than ordinary ratio of sickness and mortality being caused by the dearth of food. A Sanitary Commissioner was deputed to travel over all the districts and report upon all medical questions. Though the native medical establishments in India are weak in comparison with the growing needs of the country, still the native doctors required for the relief circles were promptly gathered together from all parts of the country.

Besides the organized circles and the relief committees, there was another important agency for the dispensing of relief, namely the Public Works Department.

It had been decided that there should be two kinds of relief works, namely petty works, such as village tanks or village paths, under the supervision of the circle officers and the relief committees; and larger works, such as roads for general traffic, under a special department of public works with Civil Engineers and with trained overseers.

In those tracts where the majority of the population have to be supported for a time by the State, the principle of employing the people on works in their villages, and close by their own doors, assumes great practical importance. It would be very difficult to employ such vast numbers advantageously on any lines of road, or other considerable public work, that could be devised. Or if such object were in any degree compassed and accomplished, this could be

done only by taking the people away from their homes, which process, however suitable for able-bodied or professional labourers, would be very detrimental to the feeble classes who have to be entertained on relief works. Fortunately the worst tracts abounded in old tanks needing fresh excavation, and in sites for new tanks. Scarcely a village was devoid of these humble, but useful works, on which the health, almost the life, of both man and beast depended. Here then was an opportunity of improving the rural water supply of the country in a manner that may be beneficially felt for more than one generation of men. The scheme also fitted in perfectly with the circle system. Accordingly the circle officers took charge of the tanks.

There were also many roads much needed for the promotion of trade, the making or repairing of which would properly benefit the people of the villages through which the lines passed, and also all the professional laborers of the surrounding country. The lines of road to be thus undertaken were immediately made over to the Public Works Department. The several series of these roads were formed into an appropriate number of executive charges. These charges were grouped into three divisions of superintendence. Over each division was placed a Superintending Engineer, and over the whole a special Chief Engineer. Every effort was made to gather together from all parts of India the requisite staff of Civil Engineers and overseers. But these professional establishments are never more than sufficient for the ordinary demands of the public works, always so very heavy in India, and much difficulty was experienced in causing the Civil Engineers, their assistants, and other subordinates, to arrive at the relief works in time. However, by strenuous efforts, the relief roads were all aligned and marked out beforehand. It will be found hereafter that the total length of these roads was expected to amount to upwards of 6,500 miles.

On the 4th February a public meeting, at which His Excellency the Viceroy presided, was held in Calcutta to consider in what way the public of India and England should be invited to help in relieving the distressed people of the drought-stricken districts. At this meeting a Central Relief Committee was appointed at Calcutta to collect subscriptions and administer such funds as might be subscribed. The Government of India undertook to place at the disposal of the Committee public funds equal to the amount of private subscriptions. The Central Committee communicated with the Lord Mayor of London, who had some weeks previously intimated his readiness to open subscriptions for a famine relief fund in England. The Lord Mayor held public meetings in London, at which a Committee was nominated. Meetings were also held at different places in England and India. By the liberality shown £282,669 in all were collected, of which £146,500 were contributed in Great Britain and £131,319 in India. The London Mansion House Committee collected in all £120,000; the Glasgow Committee sent £15,500; the Manchester Committee sent £10,000. Considerable sums were received from the Mauritius, from the Straits Settlements, and from the Dutch commercial community in Java. The Bombay Presidency subscribed £11,704; the Madras Presidency £10,500; and British Burmah £5,500. The total of the private subscriptions, together with the equal sum placed by Government at disposal of the Central Committee, amounted to £565,338.

In deference to the expressed wishes of some of the subscribers in Great Britain, the Central Committee at Calcutta decided that their expenditure should be in addition to, and not in place of, the measures which Government had undertaken for saving life in the most distressed districts. Accordingly they undertook to pay for the special relief hospitals and for the clothes and occasional money help given to paupers in the worst districts, but not for the grain that might be given to them to save their lives, the charges for which grain had been accepted by Government. In the other districts, where the scarcity was less severe, the Committee agreed to defray from their funds all charges on account of charitable relief in whatever shape given. Under this decision the expenditure from the Central Committee's funds may probably amount to about £130,000 in the worst districts, namely Tirhoot, Chumparun, Bhagulpore, Rungpore, Dinaisore, and Maldah,

and to about £290,000 for all the less distressed districts. Their total expenditure may thus amount to about £420,000 in all; but these figures must be regarded as estimates only, until the accounts are finally made up. The Committee engaged also to make provision for orphans or deserted infants who might be unprovided for at the end of the scarcity. Happily such orphans have been few in number.

When the appointment of the Central Relief Committee was first proposed, in November 1873, it was hoped that they would manage and control the operations for charitable relief, and that their funds would, so far as the amount might suffice, bear all charges for such relief. But when, as already explained in Chapter I, it became apparent that in the worst tracts the whole power of Government would be needed to avert calamity, the position somewhat altered. The Committee considered that it would be undesirable for them to have a separate organization side by side with the Government establishments. It appeared also that the responsibility of local officers would be weakened, and their action fettered; if they had to take instructions from a Central Committee in Calcutta, as well as from the Government. Some of the British subscribers had stipulated that their funds should be spent, not in contributing resources towards the saving of the life of the people—a duty ultimately devolving on and accepted by the Government—but on auxiliary forms of relief, beyond the sphere which Government relief might fill. It thus happened that the cost of gratuitous relief in the worst districts, where the brunt of the affair fell, was borne mainly by the Government. The duty of administering and controlling charitable relief operations and local committees devolved upon Government and its officers. The Central Committee received reports and accounts of expenditure of the moneys allotted by them, and rendered to the charitable public statements of the manner in which the relief funds were being spent.

The Government officers duly exhorted the more helpful classes of the community to bestir themselves. European indigo planters, native landholders and traders, took cash advances from the treasury to import grain. In many instances native zamindars caused tanks to be made, either from their own fund, or from funds borrowed for this purpose from Government; or gave some advances to their tenantry; or postponed the collection of the rents. It was not, indeed, the case that all of the native gentry fulfilled their duty in these respects; but many, perhaps most, of them did perform it in whole or in part. In Bettiah (North-West Chumperun) the powers of a vast estate were, by special delegation from the Maharaja, exercised by an European gentleman as manager.

In three of the most distressed tracts, namely, Durbhunga (east Tirhoot), Hutwa (west Sarun), Chanchul (west Maldah), extensive estates were under the management of the Court of Wards, and consequently the whole power and resources of those estates were commanded by European officers.

Meanwhile, as the preparations of Government were rapidly completed during February and March, the scarcity grew worse and worse, till during the latter half of March, there were signs of an imminent famine, which could not be stayed save by State interposition, exerted to the utmost.

Besides the marts of the towns and places of trade, there are numerous rural markets in the interior of the country, scattered amongst the villages and held weekly or bi-weekly, whence the majority of the population obtain their supplies of food. Week after week these rustic gatherings were disquieted by the sight of decreasing quantities exposed for sale, and by rumours that the stocks at the central marts were dwindling away. These rumours had, indeed, but too much foundation. There was little, almost no sign of grain being imported from a distance by private trade. Some convoys, rare and small, would arrive from a distance, and only served to show how slender was the hope in that direction. In all the marts of the most distressed districts, it was ascertained from the grain dealers that they were not importing, and did not expect to import any grain from a distance, for the plain reason that the high prices prevailing elsewhere must render such importation a losing business. Already the remnant of the rice of the past year (1873) was supposed to be exhausted. The rice stores of previous years were seldom seen. Whether they existed at all was doubtful; if they did exist they were held back by the possessors, in view of

harder times coming on. There was still some quantity available of the coarser grains, pulses, and millets of 1873. It would suffice to feed the masses for a short time only, how short no man could say. The external demeanour of the people was calm, patient, and resigned. Doubtless they had some faith in the efforts of Government, but remembering the events of former eras, they thought that the worst must come sooner or later. Presently some of the signs of popular anxiety began to appear. Incendiary fires were lighted in many places; private granaries were sometimes ransacked; and the houses of persons supposed to be hoarding hidden grain were occasionally destroyed. But no grain riots occurred at this period.

The prices of grain generally, and of rice especially, were becoming dearer, and were reaching a rate which must distress the poorer classes in many districts, namely, one rupee for ten "seers" or twenty pounds. The ordinary rate of wages for a laboring man ranged from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  annas per diem, or something under twopence to something over threepence a day, in different parts of the country. But in north Behar the lower rate prevailed. A family in the poorer classes, there, can barely live if common rice is dearer than one rupee for ten seers. In some places the price of rice was a rupee for nine, or eight, or seven seers; in other places it was even one rupee for six and five seers, which rates indicated famine. In other places there was no price quoted as the article was not procurable at all. But famine rates were not permitted to last anywhere, as soon as they had been discovered by the vigilance of the Government officers. By this time, too, the action of Government had exercised an arresting influence on the rise of prices, steadied the markets, stopped a general run being made on all available supplies, and induced the holders of stocks to produce much more than they would otherwise have produced. Although not a single public granary had been opened, not a pound of Government grain had been issued, still the people saw the long convoys of Government grain threading their way over the country. And though they could hardly believe or imagine the real extent of the measures in progress, yet the sight of Government entering the arena had a potent effect on the public mind. But for this, there would have been excessive dearness at the beginning of March, and famine prices before the end of that month, the evil being intensified by panic among a timid and ignorant people. The consequence must have been a constantly spreading mortality. This statement is necessarily one of opinion. Every care was taken that this opinion should be never subjected, or as seldom subjected as possible, to the cruel test of trial. In other words, the prevalence of famine prices was, as a rule, prevented by Government. That without such prevention they must have set in during March, is, I believe, the opinion of all, or nearly all well-informed persons, European and Native.

Besides the apprehended insufficiency of food-supply, there was another pressing difficulty, namely, the dearth of employment. In north Behar there usually is a certain scantiness of employment. There is but scanty work to be done for the spring crops, which are not largely raised. But the labourers receive wages in the winter harvest, from which they save a part for their support until the coming harvest, eking out their livelihood in various little ways. Also, numbers of them emigrate for a time to the districts on either bank of the Ganges where there is much harvesting in the spring. This year there were no savings from winter wages, and there was nothing to be earned in other ways, save by temporary migration towards the Ganges. Accordingly the number of the persons who thus went away was much greater than usual. Most fortunately the ripening Gangetic harvest of this spring was full. Therefore many hundreds of thousands men and women departed down south. But the demand in the south was limited, for there also the population is teeming. So the majority of the north Behar people stayed at home as usual, awaiting their fate. At this time (from the 10th to the 20th of March) it was not an immediate dearth of the coarser grains in the market that was to be looked for, but rather the dearth of means on the part of the people for obtaining it, either by paying money or by giving their labor for it. There was still some grain, though not much, to be bought, but the people could not buy it. The only question was, how long they could endure without coming to Government and stretching out their hands for food. Some did thus

come day by day, hundreds here and there, the aggregate mounting up to some tens of thousands all over the country, who were duly relieved. But the mass of the people were known to be suffering with silent fortitude a degree of privation which must soon force them to seek relief.

The Government officers pressed on their preparations in every direction and by every mode, though it was impossible to say from what direction and in what mode the famine would open its real attack. The first shock occurred during the second and third weeks of March, in the east and north-east quarter of Tirhoot, near Durbhunga and Mudhoobunnee, when about 400,000 persons on various dates came trooping in from the villages all around, and settled down on certain lines of relief roads, where employment was known to have been afforded to limited numbers for many days past. Almost all were in destitution, most were in very poor strength and condition, many were emaciated, and some were near starvation. After the exodus the villages were found to be almost entirely deserted. The organization of the circles and sub-circles for village relief was not finished; the engineering establishments on the relief roads had not all taken up their positions; the extensive preparations of Government had not been fully arrayed for action; the concourse of such multitudes on particular lines of road had not been contemplated. The intention was that the people should be relieved partly on the village works and partly on the roads. In this emergency the instant business was, of course, to issue money to the multitudes for purchase of food until their proper disposal could be arranged. Effort was then made to disperse the people among the relief circles and the villages. But they dreaded quitting the road, which they imagined to be the only place where subsistence could be obtained, and in their alarm they interposed all the passive resistance they could to being placed on village relief. This unwillingness caused considerable delay before they could be disposed of in such a manner that the circle officers could take systematic charge of a large proportion of them, leaving the remainder on the roads in gangs of a strength manageable by the engineer establishments. Meanwhile, before all this could be effected, masses of disorderly and unruly, though miserable and affrighted, people had to be entertained on a few miles of road. Some work was done, though quite disproportionate to the numbers employed under little more than nominal supervision. At first there was some irregularity in payment, though this was soon overcome. After a time the people were efficiently supported, though not kept properly at work. For the moment a due financial check could not be enforced. The daily enumeration of such multitudes could not be correctly made. Many persons of the lower grades, headmen of gangs, subordinate officials, and the like, found their opportunity for cheating, and made illicit gains. They exerted their influence to dissuade the people from obeying the orders which would introduce system and stop abuses. For a short time some degree of demoralization must have prevailed. But the local authorities persevered with the most commendable resolution. Their establishments for supervision were strengthened constantly, and were soon made up to the full complement. After a short time the people were reduced to order some on the roads, some on the village tanks. Those who could not work were after enquiry brought under operation of the system which had been devised for gratuitous relief. The first efforts at enforcing system were subjected to sore disadvantage, but at length the object in view was effected.

No such simultaneous rush of many masses of applicants as that at Durbhunga and Mudhoobunnee occurred elsewhere at this period of the famine, but the numbers of those seeking relief rose fast throughout the distressed area.

At this period the wages were entirely paid in cash, that is in copper pieces; in a few exceptional cases only was payment made in kind. From the beginning up to the 15th of April thirty-one lakhs of rupees, or £310,000, were disbursed for this purpose. Apparently this was calculated to encourage importation of grain from a distance by trade. No such effect, however, ensued. The real effect of this circulation of cash was the production of the greater part of the local stocks, chiefly consisting of the coarser grains other than rice.

The question naturally arises here, as to whether there were many deaths from starvation. At the outset there must be a point of time between the moment when distress is approaching the stage which would justify the auth-

rities in spreading their relief system over the country, and the moment when the system is actually instituted. It is just at this critical point of time that deaths might be apprehended. A watchful search for such cases was maintained. Some were reported and investigated, very few were authenticated. The number of proved cases up to the 18th April did not exceed twenty-two. There was every anxiety on the part of the Government officers to discover such deaths. The facts were important to them for guidance in commencing their operations. From the mistaken cases hastily reported there was manifestly willingness on the part of the people to report. If the authorities had failed in discovering the actual deaths, there were many European non-official residents and independent witnesses able to supply the omission. It may therefore be accepted that the fatal cases were comparatively few, and that there was nothing approaching to an appreciable mortality anywhere. Still it was acknowledged at the time by the Government of Bengal that there must have been some cases directly due to starvation which had never become known, and some cases indirectly due to starvation, where persons casually sick, permanently diseased, infirm, and aged, must have succumbed to insufficient nourishment. This topic will be touched upon again in this narrative, but it may here be said that if such cases had but rarely occurred up to this time (the end of March), they were still less likely to occur afterwards, for a formal enquiry was now set on foot throughout the distressed districts to search out all persons who might be thought to be in danger.

This investigation was taken in hand village by village and house by house for all the poorer classes by the circle and sub-circle officers, already described. Nominal rolls were prepared, and tickets were issued to each person on the roll entitling him or her to a specified ration of rice at the nearest Government granary. The intention was that no person should escape enrolment who was in distress and wholly unable to work, fear being felt lest many ignorant persons might, if not searched out, perish without making sign or complaint. The result of this very extensive registration showed the fear to be but too well founded. But for the close search many would at this period have pined to death in obscurity.

Authority was given to the local officers to sell Government grain under the rules in a few specified places in east and north-east Tirhoot, in north-west Chumperun, in north Bhagulpore, in parts of Purneah, Dinagepore, and Rungpore; in which places a failure of supply in the rural markets might at any moment cause a panic to burst forth and shops to be closed, the consequence whereof might be acute distress in remote places before assistance could arrive either through trade or from Government. The price was fixed at one rupee for ten\* seers of clean rice, that being a dearer rate than those which then prevailed in the principal marts. The apprehension was that if the dealers should perceive, or fancy they perceived, a chance of grain falling short, they would instantly cease selling the small stores they might have in hand. In such times there is a fear lying deep in their minds of the day coming when no man can find food; there is also the forethought of the value which would then attach to every pound of grain. The dread of inanition and the hope of profit combined would precipitate the crisis of famine prices and their consequences. In order to prevent famine it was necessary to counteract this tendency. The notification of the authority to sell Government grain in these particular places prevented the occurrence of any such crisis. The dealers, seeing that Government would not in the last resort suffer food to fail, brought forward their supplies in the ordinary way. Thus panic in the grain-markets, one of the things to be most dreaded at the outset of a famine, was never permitted to arise. But for this, the situation at the end of March would have been grievously aggravated by public alarm.

The matter was one of some delicacy, because the hope of assistance from trade had not been wholly abandoned. The orders of Government had from the first strictly enjoined the avoidance of interference with trade, and the rise of prices in the distressed tracts was the very thing most calculated to encourage importation. Dearness of food up to a certain point was regarded not with regret, but with satis-

\* Note.—The Government grain, by the time it was delivered at local granaries in the distressed districts, had cost as nearly as possible £18-8-6 per ton, equal to 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  seers of grain, or equal to about 8 seers of clean rice per rupee (8 lbs for a shilling).

faction, as being for the best in the end, and as tending to augment supplies against the evil days yet to come. Nothing therefore could be further from our intentions than the artificial lowering of prices generally. On the other hand, as the fundamental principle was the prevention of famine, we could not allow famine prices to exist long in any place, inasmuch as the continuance of such prices must mean wasting misery speedily terminating in death. The determination of the line where famine prices begin wholly depends on the circumstances of the country. What may be an unendurable rate in one place or at one time, may be borne with comparative ease at another place or time. Under the then circumstances of the most distressed districts, there was no doubt that prices dearer than one rupee for seven seers of common rice would be famine prices, which, if permitted to prevail, must cause mortality. As life was at stake, it was resolved that a remedy against such prices must be provided by Government.

In most (though not in all) cases the occurrence of famine prices according to the description above given, was taken as a sure sign of a serious deficiency of food beyond the means of the local trade to supply, and consequently as a justification for giving effect to the rules of the 26th January for the sale of Government grain.

On the other hand, the sale of Government grain was not regarded as necessarily and inevitably to be introduced on the occurrence of prices which caused grave distress. There were other modes whereby Government could supply food to the people besides selling its grain to them, inasmuch as the relief works, the gratuitous relief, the grain advances, were so many modes whereby Government would supplement the food supply in event of need. It is to be remembered that, however dear the price of food might become, there would still be certain classes able to pay it. The circle of persons thus able to pay might become smaller and smaller as matters advanced, but it would continue to exist almost up to the extremity of events. And there would be no public object for Government to lower the price on behalf of these classes. It might be, and often was, preferable to abstain from selling Government grain, notwithstanding famine prices, to leave the upper classes to pay those prices, and to relieve the poorer classes in other ways. The Government never undertook, therefore, to sell Government grain in order to lower even famine prices. Its undertaking was to save life when endangered, and it reserved to itself the discretion of choosing the mode of action most suitable to the general interests. Among those interests was the policy of interfering as little as possible with that trade upon which the food supply of the people, even with the utmost efforts of Government being exerted, so greatly depended. Therefore, whenever Government grain was sold, the price was fixed—not upon any conception of what the poorer classes could afford to pay, nor upon any assumed standard whatever—but upon an actual market standard. At some distance from the most distressed tracts, when Government grain was to be sold, there would sometimes be markets where prices were still quoted, though supplies might be scanty. At all events, there would be the markets on the main line of communication on the Ganges, where prices were regularly quoted, which markets precisely fulfilled the terms of the rules of the 26th January as being "the nearest markets accessible by rail or river." It was by the prices ruling in the markets, and by those alone, that the prices for the sale of Government grain were regulated.

The hope, however, that importation by private trade could ever effectually reach the most distressed tracts was sinking fast. In all the places where the sale of Government grain was authorized, there was not only no prospect of supplies being brought by trade, but there was a certainty that such supplies could not arrive for a long time if they ever arrived. But the quieting and steadyng effect of the authorization induced the dealers to sell gradually in the ordinary way such supplies as they had. For some time the authority to sell Government grain was little used, and when sales were opened they were not largely attended.

The sum of the allotments of Government grain made to the several districts on my estimates came to 404,000 tons, and the Government of India

had arranged to provide the whole of these amounts. Further, the Government of India having from the commencement decided to provide a reserve to meet possible contingencies, arranged to raise the total supply of Government grain to 480,000 tons, out of which 76,000 tons would be retained as reserve in Calcutta.

As already stated, the bulk of the Government grain was purchased in British Burmah, and sent thence to Calcutta. These arrangements were made (under the orders of the Government of India) by the Hon'ble Ashley Eden, c.s.i., the Chief Commissioner. The manner in which they were carried out was thus recorded in a letter addressed by the Government of India to Mr. Eden :—

"The aggregate order requiring delivery between November and May last amounted to 289,534 tons, value £2,130,874 sterling, exclusive of freight, and the details of the purchase were left to you. Upon general considerations of the state of the market and the danger of disorganizing internal trade or the ordinary export to Europe, you decided not to call for tenders, but to entrust the execution of the order to two responsible firms, who had a large private business, and were therefore interested in keeping the market steady. For this purpose you selected Messrs. Bullock Brothers and Messrs. Mohr Brothers, and you gave them an open order to purchase at market rate up to fixed limit, subject to constant communication with yourself, and to ship to Calcutta free on board at port of despatch. These firms undertook to prepare the rice by cleaning and husking it, to pack it in gunny bags and place it on shipboard, and they received a commission of 3 per cent. on their outlay. One of the greatest difficulties was, as you observe, to procure tonnage for the conveyance of the grain thus diverted from the usual channel of trade, as there was but a short time available to invite freight from distant ports, and as the whole order had to be executed within a few months. In this difficulty you were aided by the British India Steam Navigation Company, whose fleet was placed at your disposal on very reasonable terms, and was utilized to the extent of, 165,789 tons. The balance of the required tonnage was obtained by yourself chiefly in large and fast steamers, secured from various parts of the world, and thus the whole order, equal to about two-fifths of the total exportable produce of the province, was despatched and delivered in Calcutta, according to dates previously advertised, regularly, punctually, and without any kind of misadventure. You express your admiration of the energy and power of organization shown by the British India Steam Navigation Company and its officers in keeping to their engagements under the strain suddenly put upon them, and you are satisfied, on the whole, with the manner in which the firms selected by you executed the order entrusted to them, notwithstanding the numerous difficulties of detail consequent on the magnitude of the operation.

"The work is now over, and has been successfully done throughout. The Government entrusted the details of its execution to you, and thus unavoidably placed you in a new and difficult position, which required prompt decision and immediate action, coupled with secrecy, and in which any mistake must have been attended by very serious consequences, both to your own province and to the people of Bengal, whose relief was mainly dependent upon it. By the measures you adopted there has been no derangement of internal or export trade in the purchase of the required supplies, and no delay or failure in their delivery. The confidence placed in you by the Government has been fully justified by the result, and the Governor-General in Council desires to record his high appreciation of your services."

I shall conclude this chapter with a quotation from a resolution issued by the Government of India on the 6th March, which announced to all concerned the sentiments of the highest authority on the eve of the impending contest with famine.

"Active operations for the relief of distress having now commenced, the Governor-General in Council reminds local officers that it is their duty to see that the arrangements for the relief of distress are adequate within the area under their charge, and that they will be held responsible that no deaths from starvation occur which could have been avoided by any exertion or arrangements within their power and the means placed at their command.

" His Excellency in Council is satisfied that all officers have cheerfully accepted this responsibility, and that they will perform the arduous task imposed upon them with the zeal, ability, and self sacrifice which have always distinguished the servants of the Crown and of the East India Company in India in times of difficulty and danger.

" The Government has not prescribed the invariable use of any test, either by labour or by the distribution of cooked food, for the purpose of determining who are fit objects for relief. Such tests are desirable and necessary under certain circumstances. It is right that able-bodied men accustomed to labour should, as a general rule, be required to work in return for the food or money supplied to them. It is desirable that light work should be found for others, where this can be arranged profitably and without obliging large numbers of people to leave their homes. In dealing with certain classes of distress, especially in towns, the issue of relief in cooked food may be useful as a test. But stringent tests are inapplicable to those limited tracts of country where, owing to the great failure of the crops and the absence of private trade, the Government have, in accordance with their resolution of the 7th November last, assumed the task of importing grain for sale and distribution to the people.

" In such tracts the difficulty will be not to prevent undeserving applicants from being relieved, but to ensure that sufficient supplies reach those who require them; and, in addition to the mode of relief and the provision for the sale of grain specified in the instructions to Relief Committees, grain should be freely advanced to zemindars and mahajuns under the instructions already issued by the Government of Bengal, as well as to cultivating ryots, where there is a reasonable probability of repayment, at the discretion of the local officers, and with a due regard to the maintenance of a sufficient reserve."

The succeeding chapter will show how the above instructions and all the previous orders were executed during the worst period of the distress.

### CHAPTER III.

THE narrative has been continued up to the middle of April, that is, up to the time when the scarcity was approaching its full development, and when the relief operations were covering their entire extent with all their force. Before proceeding further I will pause to give in this chapter a statistical summary of the results of the estimates described in the last chapter as regards—

- 1st, the famine,
- 2nd, the relief operations,
- 3rd, the financial cost.

The first category relates to the famine itself. The area is divided into two parts, namely, the very distressed tracts, comprising a large portion of the districts of Sarun, Chumparun, Tirhoot, Bhagulpore, Purneah, Dinagepore, Rungpore, and Bogra, and the partly distressed tracts, comprising portions of the districts of Shahabad, Gya, Monghyr, Sonthalia, Maldah, Rajshahye, Pubna, Moorshedabad, Julpigoree, Burdwan, Beerbboom, Bankoora, Manbboom, Nuddea, and some scattered places not worth mentioning separately.

The following table shows the area of distress, the population affected, the maximum number of persons expected to need assistance from Government, the percentage of that number upon such population, and the quantity of Government grain allotted:

1	2	3	4	5	6
	Area in square miles.	Population.	Number of persons expected to require assistance from Government at the worst season.	Percentage of numbers in column 4 on numbers in column 3.	Quantity in tons of Government grain allotted.
Very distressed tracts	20,950	10,700,000	2,805,080	26·2	330,000
Partly distressed tracts	19,159	7,084,650	918,484	11·5	74,000
Total ...	40,109	17,784,650	3,723,564	20·9	404,000

The quantity of grain above shown (404,000 tons) is that which, up to the middle of April, the Government of Bengal had undertaken to carry from the railway stations into the interior of the districts. It is exclusive of the quantity ordered for the reserve at Calcutta under the Government of India, which brought the grand total up to 480,000 tons.

The numbers of the villages, and of the houses to be inspected or visited for relief purposes, especially in the partly distressed tracts, could not be stated precisely enough for insertion in a statistical summary. But approximately it was calculated that the work would spread over 27,750 villages containing about 2,096,843 houses.

The area affected by the failure of crops has been stated to be about 40,000 square miles. It is not possible to state precisely the area of crops that were lost; but an estimate framed, district by district, on the best data available, shows that the loss must have been from 3 to 3½ million tons of food, a quantity equal to the average out-turn of 6 to 7 million acres of food-producing land. The vacuum in the supplies was, we may believe, filled by the importation of 1,000,000 tons of grain on the part of trade and of Government together, by the consumption of old stocks to an extent that cannot be stated, and by the cultivation of a very largely increased area with early food-crops, whereby a great quantity of food was thrown into the market during August and September 1874, two or three months before the time when the main rice-crop is usually available. Further, there was some compensation afforded by diminished consumption in consequence of the high prices.

The next table shows the means of transport with which the task was to be undertaken of carrying the 404,000 tons of grain, generally by rough and unmade roads, over distances ranging from 20 to 155 miles.

	European Officers of the Army.	Native Officers and Soldiers.	Carts.	Cartmen.	Draught bullocks.	Camels.	Pack animals, chiefly mules and ponies.	Country boats.	Steamers.	Number of main routes of trans- port.
Carriage belonging to the country ...	43	1,030	99,900	102,575	202,800	1,350	3,000	2,340	9	23
Government reserve transport train ...	45	1,086	4,250	4,250	10,000	.....	11,000	...	14	.....
Total ...	88	2,116	104,150	106,825	212,800	1,350	14,000	2,340	23	23

If the amount of transport, then, engaged by land and water, shall seem enormous, it is to be remembered that the figures represent the highest amount of transport in use or to be used at any one time. In most cases the maximum amount of transport remained in employ but for a short time, say, a very few weeks. About two-thirds of the aggregate was intended to be employed continuously for four months.

The statistics having been given of the numbers of persons to be relieved in some shape or other, of the Government grain allotted, and of the means and resources for transporting that grain, there remain to be given the statistics of the means for dispensing the relief and for distributing the grain.

The following table exhibits the numbers of the relief centres of various kinds:—

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Central Committee.	District and Sub-divisional Relief Com- mittees.	Organized circles under Government or officers.	Sub-circles or groups.	Circles under private persons, European or Native.	Sub-Com- mittees.	Total of all Relief Circles.
1	90	158	1,141	242	650	2,231

The relief centres then, great and small, amounted to 2,281 in number. All of them had grain depôts and granaries, besides which there were special depôts at the starting places of the main lines of transport. Altogether the number of depôts and granaries together was not less than 2,300.

The special administrative staff ordered or appointed to the relief centres shown in the last table may be classified as below. The average period for which this special establishment was to be employed was expected to be seven, perhaps eight months.

European superior officers.	Circle officers.	Native officers.	Grain store-keepers and other ministerial officers.	Private persons, European or Native, employed on relief.	Total of all grades.
102	158	1,279	3,395	2,026	6,960

The special establishments for relief were over and above the ordinary civil establishments of the districts concerned. The total number of men (6,960) represents men of training and education from the highest degree to the lesser degrees. But it is exclusive of messengers, watchmen, and menial servants, who were very numerous, and could hardly be specified numerically: the number of these, however, was believed to be not less than 9,800. If this last-named number be correct, the total numerical strength of the relief establishments alone must have amounted to 16,760 men.

As previously explained, there were medical establishments engaged for the relief centres, which may be numerically shown as below:—

European Surgeons.	Native Assistant Surgeons and Doctors.
5	136

Besides these, the ordinary medical staff of the distressed tracts were much occupied in attending the relief hospitals and supervising the administration of in-door relief.

As already seen, one of the principal modes of affording relief was employment on public works. The next table shows the various classes of public works then intended to be undertaken or prosecuted for this purpose, each column representing distance in miles:—

Relief roads.	Soane Canal works.	Gunduk embankments.	Northern Bengal Railway.
Miles.	Miles.	Miles.	Miles.
6,626	380	90	198

If the proposed length of relief roads should seem extraordinarily great, it is to be remembered that the work was for the most part to consist of throwing up embankments or preparing plain unmetalled roadways, partly also of repairing old roads, and that comparatively few bridges or culverts were expected to be built.

As already seen, one important class of works for the employment of the people consisted of tanks; partly constructing new tanks, but chiefly excavating the old village tanks, especially in north Behar. It was impossible to give any precise number of the tanks thus worked upon more or less, but the total number was expected to amount to not less than 2,500.

The public works shown above do not include any works of general utility or agricultural improvement, undertaken by private persons, European or Native, indigo planters, zemindars, and others. It was impossible to foresee exactly how much such private persons would be induced to do in this direction, though there was every hope and belief that much was being and would yet be done by them.





The numbers were rising daily everywhere, and official warning had been received from many places that a more rapid increase must be expected. In most of the distressed districts complaint and entreaty had been made by the cultivating classes to the effect that, as their subsistence until the next August harvest was running short, they might receive advances of Government grain. And in every possible way the people were making known to the officials their anxiety that the Government granaries should be opened everywhere without any more delay, for the sale of grain to the public, for payment of relief wages in kind, and for the general administration of relief. The Government granaries had been for the most part kept closed, partly in order that private trade might have the fairest chance possible, in order that the resources of private stocks might be tested by paying wages wherewith the people would buy their food, and that the arrival of the Government stores in adequate quantities might be secured, before opportunity should be given for very heavy demand.

There was no room for doubt that, while private trade was doing all in its power in many directions with the greatest public advantage, yet there were extensive limits of territory within which it was powerless, and in which there was a general demand beyond its means to supply. The payment of relief wages in cash, by stimulating purchases, had brought out private stocks till they were near depletion. The transport department had succeeded in bringing up enough supplies to meet any demand that could practically be made.

To postpone longer the general issue of Government grain, would be to aggravate the sufferings of the people. It was therefore decided that all gratuitous relief must be given in grain, except a small portion which might continue in cash; that all wages to relief labourers must be paid in grain, cash-payments being stopped as soon as might be practicable; that the relief officers need no longer hesitate to sell Government grain to the public, in all places where such selling had already been authorized, and should immediately apply for permission to sell in any place where the circumstances might seem to necessitate this measure under the rules; that the numerous applications from cultivators and ryots for advances of food-grain must be entertained, and, after enquiry, allowed in all cases where the authorities considered that there was a fair prospect of recovery.

Thus all the parts of the general scheme were brought into effect, and all the forces at our disposal were exerted. In succeeding paragraphs, it will be shown how the executive decision was carried out respecting each of the above points in order.

Before doing so, I must advert to the working of the relief circles and sub-circles, inasmuch as the execution of all orders depended on the circle system; and also to the proceedings of the regular Public Works Department in connection with that system.

The organization of the relief circles and sub-circles in one shape or other, and of the relief committees and sub-committees, as already described, had been by this time completed in all the distressed districts. The very numerous staff of officers and officials (set forth in Chapter III) had arrived at their posts. In the worst tracts every cluster of villages, from five to ten in number, was formed into a group with a native official, and a store of grain with its store-keeper; so that every village could be visited twice a week or oftener, and Government grain be within reach at a distance of two or three miles at the furthest. The several groups in each circle were being frequently inspected by the European circle officer and his assistants. The organization was simple in itself. Its real magnitude, and the difficulty of enforcing it, will be apparent only when the area and population over which it extended are borne in mind. The apportionment of the relief labourers between the circle officers and the Public Works Department had been effected. The relief roads had been visited by the several superintending engineers, and a certain degree of departmental method and check had been established.

The issue of rations in grain to the recipients of charitable relief was arranged without difficulty. The grain consisted generally of rice. It was necessary that, together with the rice, some other kind of grain or some vegetable and condiment should be taken. To enable these people

to purchase the accessories, a small portion, one-sixth, of the ration was given in money. It was not found expedient as a rule to issue cooked or prepared food, save in a few places. The investigation adverted to in Chapter II had been finished, and the registers had been prepared of all fit recipients of this relief. The tickets entitling the people named to gratuitous relief had been issued to each person or to each family. Those who were able to do any, even the lightest kind of work—weaving, spinning, or the like—had their tasks allotted. Those who were unable to take any care of themselves, were lodged in poor-houses, or placed under medical supervision. There was still, however, some difficulty in searching out all the fit objects of this relief. The superior officers of the circles, on going their rounds in the villages to see whether the registration had been completely done, would find here and there some feeble person not included in the registers. And at each weekly or bi-weekly inspection by the group or sub-circle officials, the nominal roll was swelling. In justice to the people, it must be said that but little imposture came to light. We had to guard rather against their holding back unduly, than against their coming forward improperly. Whether from shyness, or ignorance, or resignation, or despair, they often faced mortal danger in a manner which inspired both pity and esteem.

By degrees those persons who from caste, delicate nurture, social seclusion, or such like reason could neither work nor beg, were added more and more to these lists. In north Behar, the Tirhootea Brahmins form a very numerous class. Some few of them were induced to work for Government wages, by the persuasion of a relief officer who was himself a Brahmin. It is probable that the majority of them would, sooner than work, have drifted into a condition near to starvation. The local authorities deferred relieving these cases as long as possible, but gradually admitted them according as the imperative demands of safety might dictate. The people of this class, however, were, from a natural pride, often unwilling to be regarded as recipients of altogether gratuitous relief, and would endeavour to pay something, however small.

In the Burdwan division only was there any reason to take precautions against imposture. There the endemic fever had necessitated the administration of relief, medical or other, during several years past, and some classes had gradually fallen into habits of undue dependence on public charity. Here the issue of cooked-food served as an effective check in this Division.

It was ruled that the payment of wages of relief labourers in grain might be arranged in more ways than one. The most direct way was the issue of grain to the men. But the authorities might establish grain-shops at, or close by, the works, and issue money to the men, wherewith they would buy grain at these shops. Or the men receiving their wages in money might purchase their food at the nearest Government granary. About the time when these orders were being given, a difficulty with many large gangs of these labourers on the relief roads had sprung up in several districts, and more especially in Mudhoobunnee and north-eastern Tirhoot. These people had been paid on the plan of daily wages, which meant that a person—man, woman, or child—should labour all the working hours of the day, and receive a daily wage at rates fixed for men, women, and children, respectively. The rates being hardly higher than those of ordinary times, were very low in places of dearness and scarcity. This plan, though applicable to limited numbers, was found, when applied to very large numbers, to militate against any effective supervision by measuring up of work actually done; to fail in offering a reward to industry or imposing a penalty on idleness; to give birth to many petty abuses, and especially to afford opportunities of wrongful gain to gangmen who had to be selected from among the people themselves for watching the work of the ganga. During the first rush, crush, and stress of relief affairs, the introduction of the piece-work plan (which is much preferable) had not been practicable; but it was resolved to take the earliest safe opportunity of introducing it. The piece-work plan meant fixing a rate of payment for a specified amount of earth-work, measuring up the work actually done, and paying accordingly. The terms first proposed for the piece-work were quite liberal as compared with those which would be allowed in ordinary times, and even in these hard times



in the north-west corner of Chumparun, in parts of Sarun and of Bogra, also in Julpigoree, near Cooch Behar. And in some parts of west Tirhoot (near Mozufferpore) distress was found to have brought the villagers to the border of destruction, when succour arrived to save them. In Julpigoree there was serious rioting, though of very brief duration. In no other district did any breach of the peace occur.

About this period some disappointment began to be felt at the amount of labour on the large engineering works not being larger than it was. The Gunduk embankment, indeed, being very favorably situated in respect to distressed tracts, did attract almost as many labourers as could be advantageously entertained—45,000. But the Soane Canal and the Northern Bengal Railway never received the desired complement. The highest numbers of labourers on these works may be thus stated:—

Soane Canal ...	... 41,000
Northern Bengal Railway ...	... 22,000

Unsuccessful attempts were made to induce bodies of laborers from Sarun to resort to the Soane Canal, and from the south of the Ganges, Monghyr, and Sonthalia to the Northern Bengal State Railway. Frequent injunctions were sent to the local authorities to send labourers to that railway, but without much result. These numbers would have been greater had there been no other relief work. Some men who might have been induced to leave their homes and go to a distance for these great works, preferred lesser works close at hand. But this objection cannot be obviated, when, from general famine, it has become necessary to spread a relief system over the country. The majority of relief labourers cannot migrate to a distance for a short time; they have their families, their fields, and their concerns at home, all which will in a very few weeks urgently need their presence. Their time would be lost in going and coming, and unless they received bounties (which are otherwise objectionable) they could not subsist. For them, therefore, if no works but the great engineering works are open, there will be no relief at all, and they must perish. But if the numerous lesser works are open for them (and they are the vast majority) it is impossible to prevent the few who could migrate from taking advantage of the works near at home. Nor is this wholly disadvantageous. For these are the very men who, having skill, show the unskilled multitudes how to work, and thus render the relief labour more productive.

It is not to be forgotten, indeed, that even in ordinary years, if State works, whether for relief or other purposes, were to be opened in the month of May, they would attract a certain number of people. But no such numbers, nor a fraction of such numbers, would ever be attracted to out-door work at this burning season, as those which flocked to, and lived upon the relief works in May 1874, unless they were really suffering from hunger.

The applications from cultivators and ryots for advances of food-grain became so very numerous, that it would be impossible to dispose of each separately. Therefore in the more distressed tracts an enquiry was instituted by the circle officers, village to village, as to what cultivators desired and really needed such advances. A registry having been thus made of fit recipients, the circle officers granted the advances. The amounts in various cases differed according to circumstances, representing food for the cultivator and his family for one month, or two months, or even more. Sometimes the cultivator was able to pledge some little property as security; or the cultivators of a village would be joint personal security one for the other; or the landholder and zemindar would be security for his cultivators. The advances were allowed to be made in all cases where there was a reasonable probability of repayment according to the principle laid down by the Government of India on the 6th March, in the resolution quoted at the end of Chapter II. The terms of these advances were that the price of the grain was to be repaid, half by March 1875, and the remainder by March 1876. The price at which repayment was to be made was 15 seers per rupee, and subsequently the price was cheapened to 18 seers per rupee in the case of advances made on the security of zemindars. According to the prices of

ordinary years, a ryot will have to sell at least two maunds of rice in 1875 and 1876 to raise funds for repaying the price of one maund advanced in 1874. Though no interest is charged on Government grain advances, yet the terms to the ryot will practically be cent. per cent. interest in kind for the loan of the grain for two years. Although the Government, receiving back its principal only in cash, does not of course reap any such interest; still it will be seen that the terms of these advances were made as favorable for the public treasury as they could be with regard to the safety of the people.

As the cultivating season approached, on the falling of the summer showers which usually precede the setting in of the rains, the policy of making these advances became seriously important. The men must be tilling their fields, and would be thereby precluded from earning wages elsewhere. But what if there should be no food to be bought, or if they should have no means of buying it, or if, to raise the means, they should have to part with their little capital, their seed-grain and their cattle? These questions involved the prospects of the future crops.

The advances tended especially to prevent the consumption, for food, of grain which ought to be reserved for seed. If they were withheld, there was every reason to fear that seed-grain might not be forthcoming for the next sowings. Some quantity of seed-grain was known to be in the hands of the trade. It was desired to get some of this into the possession of Government for distribution, in event of need, to cultivators. The local officers were authorized to exchange some of the Government food-grain for this seed-grain, which was accordingly done to a limited extent. Some quantity of seed-grain was also purchased by Government in Calcutta for the use of the distressed districts.

While the State was thus doing its utmost for the relief of the people, the efforts of the zemindars and landholders and nearly all the principal natives who hold land (which have been already alluded to in Chapter II) were exerted more and more in respect to the digging of tanks, to advances to the tenantry, and to the postponement of rent-collections. The conduct of many zemindars was honourably conspicuous. There were, indeed, omissions, short-comings, and failures, on the part of individuals, all which may furnish matter for regret. But when the enumeration comes to be made of the good deeds done by the zemindars as a body during this famine, the catalogue will be found to be extensive and creditable.

I must now advert to the sale of Government grain. Although in some few parts of North Behar there was a rush of purchasers on the opening of the granaries for these sales, yet during April the whole amount sold was small—less than 10,000 tons. The people were allowed to purchase direct from the Government granaries. Generally, however, the grain was sold to dealers on the condition that they retailed it at the fixed rate to the public. Often, too, it was sold to wholesale dealers at a slight advantage over the retail rate to enable them to distribute it among the retail dealers. The prices were slightly modified in favour of the people as compared with that first fixed (one rupee for ten seers of cleaned rice to be sold to the consumers), and were fixed at rates from one rupee for ten seers to one rupee for twelve seers. The rates then prevailing at Calcutta, Dacca, Patna, and other great marts were somewhat cheaper. It was with reference to these market rates, and to these alone, that the prices of the Government grain were regulated. The determination of any artificial standard of price was avoided; and the principles already explained in Chapter II were adhered to.

It will here be proper to state the tracts where the sale of Government grain was and was not authorized. Such sale was authorized over the greater part of Tirhoot, Chumparun, North Bhagulpore, North Monghyr, parts of Purneah, Dinagepore, Rungpore, Maldah, and Bogra. In the above districts the people largely availed themselves of the privilege. Sale was subsequently authorized in very limited tracts of Manbhoom, Rajshahye, Moorshedabad, Sonthalia, Julpigoree, Sarun, and Bankoora, and at four places in Gya. In these last named tracts the people availed themselves but slightly of the privilege. Sale was never authorized in south Tirhoot, Shahabad, Burdwan, Beerbhoom, Hazareebagh, Pubna, and in parts of Sarun, Purneah, Dinagepore, and Rungpore. On the

whole the sales were authorized in about one-third of the area of the distressed districts, and were never authorized in the remaining two-thirds.

Up to the 10th of June, the total sales of Government grain in all the distressed districts amounted to only 47,389 tons.

Native opinion may be regarded as having an important bearing on the question whether these sales really interfered with trade. I questioned the native grain dealers at all, or nearly all, of the principal marts in Behar and Bengal, and found them unanimously in favour of the measure, provided that it was carried out under the conditions prescribed by Government. In some places the traders urged the measure on our consideration, and constituted themselves advocates on behalf of their suffering fellow citizens. From their own repeated declarations it appeared that they were not afraid of Government interference. From no persons have I heard stronger expressions of gratitude, or more distinct assertions that the State had saved the fortunes of the traders by saving the lives of their constituents, than from the principal native merchants of Behar.

The best illustration, however, is that derivable from the facts of the grain trade during the summer of 1874, which may now be summarized.

The districts in which the sales of Government grain was not authorized, or was kept within narrow limits, were supplied largely by private trade. The concession whereby Government defrayed half the railway freight on grain, and so enabled private importers to carry their grain by railway at the rate of about 3½ pies (less than a half-penny) per ton per mile, produced an important result in the shape of large private importation into the distressed districts. Rice from Bengal, wheat, barley, maize, millet, and other grains from northern and central India, were brought by rail to all the chief marts on or near the line of the East Indian Railway. For some months the importation of private grain into Behar alone by railway averaged from 1,200 to 2,000 tons a day. The total of private grain imported into Behar by railway, from October 1873 to October 1874, amounted to—

	Tons.
From Bengal upwards ...	157,226
" northern and central India ...	<u>225,952</u>
Total ...	383,178

The grain imported into Behar by the Ganges during the same period was registered at Sahebgunge and found to amount to 44,886 tons. The rice imported from the eastern districts into northern Bengal came by many different channels, and could not be registered or reckoned as it passed. The total importations of rice from Bengal by rail and river into Behar have been seen to have reached a total of 202,000 tons. It is estimated that about half as much more (101,000 tons) was carried into northern Bengal (Rajshaye) from the neighbouring granaries of the eastern districts. According to this estimate, a total of 529,000 tons of grain must have been carried by private trade into the distressed districts. This large total shows that private trade has been active beyond the anticipations of most people, and has fully justified the confidence placed by the Government of India at the beginning of the affair in the resources and enterprise of private dealers. It has been already explained that prices were everywhere so high, that private traders could not afford to carry grain by long land journeys to markets far from the railways or great rivers; and that consequently private importation scarcely penetrated to the most remote and most distressed parts of north Behar and northern Bengal. But the private importation, as just shown, fully supplied the broad and densely peopled tracts near the railways, and left the Government free to concentrate its supplies and resources mainly on the most distressed tracts.

It may be interesting to note here the total quantity of grain, public and private, imported into the distressed districts during the year 1874. The total Government importations (exclusive of the reserve in Caleutta) amounted to about 460,000 tons; this, together with 529,000 tons of grain carried into the country by private dealers, makes a total of about one million tons of food, a quantity sufficient to support about eight million persons for six months. Of the Government stocks, about 105,000 tons will, in consequence of the favorable character of the present autumn season, remain unexpended at the end of

October, when all relief measures will be for the most part at an end everywhere save in the Burdwan country.

It is a sign of the great resources of the provinces of India that, notwithstanding the drain on northern India and Burmah during the past ten months, the price of food in those countries is at the present moment about as cheap as in ordinary years.

While all parts of the general relief scheme were in force during April and May, causing a present drain on the Government granaries, with the prospect of a still heavier drain from and after June, the efforts of the inland transport department were strained to the utmost degree of tension. Some of the European contractors, those in Chumparun, north-west of Tirhoot, and north Bhagulpore won the highest credit by their vigorous management and unfailing punctuality, performing their engagements some weeks before the appointed time. The Native contractors in Sarun, Purneah, Maldah, and Dinagepore did almost equally well. Delays however came about in Rungpore and in Manbhoom, partly because the local officers persevered in their endeavours to obtain carriage without the aid of contractors, and partly because cholera attacked the transit routes. Providentially the cholera soon ceased, and the other obstacles were soon overcome by the despatch of experienced transport officers to the spot, with authority to make contracts.

In eastern and north-eastern Tirhoot, all the troubles which had been foreseen as incidental to transport work, sickness and mortality of cattle, scantiness of water, poor ness of fodder, roughness of roads, breaking up of carts, large deficiency of carriage below the amount which the contractors had expected to bring into the field, falling off in the amount of carriage which had at the outset been forthcoming, actually threatened us in combination, and in their totality assumed formidable proportions. The aggregate of losses and deficiencies was estimated as being represented by a failure of 14,000 carts and 28,000 bullocks. Had there been no additional resource available, it would have been difficult at this time to avert disasters on this, the most important of all the lines of Bur operations. There would, indeed, have been no general resource to fall back upon save the water-carriage during the coming rainy season, which resource might not prove adequate. In this emergency the railway from the Ganges to Durbhunga, and the reserve transport train from northern India, came into use.

The railway to Durbhunga began to carry grain from the last week in April, and by the second week in June, when it was first invaded by the floods, and ultimately broken up, it carried 31,213 tons of grain, 8,031 tons of fodder, besides 7,530 tons of coal and material. After the closing of the line the rolling stock and permanent-way material remained available. The actual cost of the temporary line amounted to about £100,000, exclusive of the cost of material which remained in hand after the grain transport was done.

The Government reserve transport train made its appearance in detachments, the first of which rendered assistance in carrying materials for the completion of the Durbhunga railway. One detachment after another came on the scene, consisting sometimes of carts and bullocks, sometimes of pack mules and ponies. Though originally intended as a reserve, this transport train was regularly used immediately on its arrival. Each detachment on crossing to the north bank of the Ganges was, without an hour's delay, employed to make up for losses or deficiencies in the contractors' carriage. As the exigency grew intense towards the end of May and the beginning of June, the pressure upon the bullock carts, and especially on the mules and ponies, became excessive, and many animals sank under the toil at the most inclement season of the whole year. If any misgiving had ever arisen as to the necessity of collecting this costly reserve, it was dissipated by the event. The necessity was abundantly proved at this critical and crucial juncture. The presence of the reserve transport train was indispensable to the safe conclusion of the operations in Tirhoot.

The main object during May was to fill every dépôt at relief centres, and every granary in the groups of villages, with its allotment of grain while the roads and pathways were open, and the dry rice-fields afforded easy passage. Besides this, supplies were lodged beforehand in most of the principal villages enough to last for consumption during the rainy season. The time was foreseen when

the rains would hinder the despatch of convoys, would damage exposed grain, would clog the roadways, and would flood the rice-fields.

The exertions of the military officers, both those engaged in arranging the affairs of the contract transport and preparing the transit routes, and those in charge of the Government reserve transport train, were unremitting, and caused a degree of hardship and exposure to a fierce climate, which taxed all their powers of physical and mental endurance. The business which devolved on the transport department of ensuring the due arrival of so many convoys, passing by so many routes to so many diverse points, was very complicated. It was aggravated by the stress arising from urgent haste, but it was discharged with a degree of precision and punctuality most creditable to the officers concerned. Equally great was the endurance and self-sacrifice evinced by the officers in charge of the depôts on both banks of the Ganges, and equally commendable was the despatch of business on their part. The affairs at the two great depôts on the north bank (Bunker Ghât, opposite Patna, and Chumpta Ghât, opposite Barh), were extraordinarily complex, and were disposed of by the officers in charge with remarkable skill, and with entire regularity, notwithstanding the pressure of speed and expedition, with the discomforts, the blinding glare and the dusty heat of an unsheltered situation.

The total quantity of grain ordered to be transported to the interior from the north bank of the Ganges by the middle of June, amounted to 343,750 tons, of which about 340,000 tons were carried within the appointed time. The small residue arrived within a short time afterwards. During this period, although the cattle suffered severely in parts of north-east Tirhoot, there was no general sickness, murrain, or epidemic. The Government fodder as it arrived proved most useful, and the veterinary establishments in the field hospitals tended the ailing and injured animals.

The weather during the months of April and May was unusually dry. The showers to be looked for at that season never fell; much fear was felt lest a dearth of water should supervene. The running streams, so frequent in north Behar, were at the lowest ebb. The water in wells, usually a few feet below the surface, was reached only at a considerable depth. The tanks were drying up, but were dug out deeper and deeper by the relief laborers till water was obtained. Thus a supply was maintained in all the villages. These village tanks are in constant use with the mass of the people, and are very numerous all over the country. The improvement of them in a manner, which must be gratefully appreciated for many years to come, will be one of the results of the relief operations.

The public health was good, probably above the average of ordinary years, throughout this drought and heat. No epidemic sickness broke out. The people were spared the visitations of cholera and small-pox which had been so much dreaded. Relief had been so fully dispensed that the general diseases which are known to follow in the train of famine never supervened. The stronger classes, mostly to be found on the relief works, were in good physical condition. The weaker classes, mostly to be found on the gratuitous relief lists, were, on medical inspection, found to exhibit all the miserable symptoms which arise from want of nourishment. But their state improved week by week; and the medical reports constantly showed a decreasing percentage of persons emaciated and depressed, and an increasing ratio of persons in ordinary condition. Reports of death from starvation were very rare. The authenticated cases numbered only 22 from the commencement of the scarcity to the 20th June, which may be taken as the culminating point of the distress. The question whether more cases have occurred which never came to light, has been discussed in Chapter II. Whatever may have been the truth in this respect at the outset of the famine, it is probable that extremely few deaths could have occurred beyond those officially reported after the middle of April, inasmuch as the whole country was patrolled, officials being within reach of every village, and every hamlet, almost every house, being visited or inspected.

The health of the civil officers and officials engaged in relief was, on the whole, excellent, notwithstanding the mental and bodily strain caused by their devoted exertions during the worst season, and out-door exposure in all hours of the hottest days. Their self-denying zeal, their earnestness

in the business of relief, their patience in dealing with the people, were exemplary.

Although the casualties among these officers which had been anticipated did not occur, still it was thought that many accidents and misfortunes of this sort would happen during the wet season. The formation of a reserve staff of officers of all grades was commenced, and was calculated at a strength of ten per cent. upon the existing relief establishment. Officers in different parts of India were told off to join this reserve immediately on their services being called for. But happily the health of the relief establishment continued so good, that very few of the reserve officers had to be demanded.

The month of June was ushered in amidst public anxiety and gloom in north Behar. The drought was then excessive, and its continuance for another season was much thought of. The people seemed to be making up their minds for a prolongation of trouble. The existence, or otherwise, of private stocks of grain was universally discussed. If they existed, the holders were certainly keeping them back. Prices were steadied by the Government stores, now seen by every one to have arrived in adequate quantities. But for this, famine prices with all their fatal consequences must have prevailed. Indeed, despite all precautions, they did for a brief moment prevail in several places.

Although the arrival of the allotted quantities of Government grain before the setting in of the rains was assured, still the contingency was foreseen of having to send additional quantities by water during the rains when the rivers had risen. With this view a special examination of the navigable rivers in Behar and north Bengal had been made by an engineering staff, experienced in respect to inland navigation. Small light steamers (of 3½ feet draught) four in number, with barges, had been specially constructed in the Calcutta dock-yard. Ten such steamers with barges had been sent out from England. Four more small steamers, with five barges, had been obtained in Bengal and Madras. Canoes had been obtained from the forest department in Oude, and the services of a large number of the river craft of the Ganges had been retained. The strength and composition of this flotilla may be thus stated—

Steamers.	Barges.	River boats.	Canoes.
18	22	4,000	800

A portion of this water-carriage was to be stationed at those points on the Ganges where the several main affluents and their tributaries join the great river, namely—

	Steamers.	Barges.	River boats.	Canoes.
At Hajeeapore for the Gunduk river system of Chumparun and south-west Tirhoot	6	6	750	...
At Khaguriah for the river system of east Tirhoot and north Bhagulpore	7	9	1,500	800
At Godagaree for the Mahanuddee river system of Maldia and Purnea	4	5	1,000	...
At the Burial river for the Atrai river system of Dinaigapore and Bogra	3	3	750	...

By the water-carriage were despatched some quantities of fodder and of grain which the land transport was not able to carry; also such amounts of grain as were despatched after the setting in of the rains in addition to the original allotments. But inasmuch as the quantities sent by land proved in the main amply sufficient, the powers of the flotilla never were exerted to the full. The steamers sent from England, as well as those built in Calcutta, proved (with some slight exceptions) suitable and effective vessels for inland river navigation.

It is to be remembered that the number of vessels of all kinds last mentioned is over and above the number of vessels mentioned in Chapter III.

It has been mentioned that many hundreds of temporary store-houses had to be erected for the reception of Government grain. These granaries were of all sizes, and contained from 4,000 tons down to half a ton each. They were for the most part built of wood, mud, matting, and straw, according to the custom of the

locality. During the dry months only two of these granaries were destroyed by fire. Before the beginning of the rainy season, selected officers were deputed to inspect every granary containing 400 tons or upwards. These inspections were completed by the appointed time. Occasionally defects of structure or of site were discovered, and some few granaries were found to be insufficiently raised from the ground, or to be not quite water-tight. The inspecting officers caused all such defects to be remedied at once; and the Government grain has been almost everywhere kept sound and wholesome throughout the rainy season.

In Tirhoot during June it was deemed prudent to increase the provision of Government grain from 154,000 tons to 180,000 tons. Subsequently in Sarun the distress among the ryot classes was found to be spreading more widely than had been expected when the estimate was made in February, and at the earnest request of the Collector, the allotment was raised from 19,000 tons to 34,000 tons.

A general permission was given to pay in Government grain the wages of the lowest grades of the relief establishments, whenever the recipients might prefer that mode of payment.

The fortnight between the 4th and the 18th June was the worst period of the famine, that is to say, the period during which the greatest amount of assistance had to be afforded by Government to the people. The approximate ascertainment of the total number of persons who, in some shape or other, received such assistance is a matter of great interest. Although the number of persons on charitable relief and on relief works were known exactly, the numbers who were assisted by sales and advances of Government grain could only be made out by estimate and calculation. It may be well here to quote the statement which I presented at the time (7th July).

"In order to estimate the total number of persons receiving assistance of "some sort during the first fortnight of June, we have the following data to "form a basis:—

Total number of relief laborers	...	...	1,770,732
Total number of persons on charitable relief	...	...	401,959
Total grain expenditure, in maunds, of first half of June	...	...	843,000

"Thus we have 2,172,691 persons receiving relief, quite irrespective of "those who are living on advances or purchases of Government grain. The "amount of Government grain disposed of during the fortnight would give "three-fourths of a seer a day to 3,401,900 persons for a fortnight. But among "the people who consumed Government grain were all the persons on charitable "relief, and a large portion of the labourers. The district narratives show "that by the end of the first fortnight of June the practice of paying all "labourers in grain, though largely introduced, had not been fully carried out. "The Bhagulpore return is the one which best distinguishes between sales to the "public and those to labourers; and that shows 98,228 maunds sold to the "public, as against 25,628 maunds sold to labourers. All the district narratives "show that the non-labouring public are the chief customers at our granaries.

"It would therefore be probably within the truth to take one-half of the "persons supported by Government grain as being outside the relief labour and "charitable relief lists. By this reckoning the total numbers receiving assistance in one shape or another would be—

Labourers and paupers as above	...	...	2,172,691
One-half the consumers of Government grain	...	...	1,700,950
<b>Total</b>	...	...	<b>3,873,641</b>

"The best estimate that we can now frame shows that the number at the "worst period was 3,900,000 persons receiving assistance of some sort."

As stated at the time, this statement, though very large, may have been slightly under the truth, certainly not above it. It apparently agrees, as nearly as could be expected, with the estimated number given at the beginning of April, as shown in Chapter III. The general percentage of this number on the population affected was seen in that Chapter to be 26 per cent. in the most distressed districts and 11½ in those less distressed. The ratio of course varied

considerably, being in many places less than that above stated; but in the worst tracts of north Behar it stood as high as from 50 to 75 per cent.

But there was a further mode whereby assistance was rendered by Government, which could hardly be included in any particular statement presented at that time, namely the cash advances made by Government to individuals, European planters, native traders, and others, for the importation of grain, and to landholders and zamindars for agricultural improvements. These advances of cash went on, month by month, till they reached the sum of forty-six lakhs of rupees, or close upon half a million pounds sterling. How many persons virtually derived their subsistence from this source, it is impossible to say. But the sum was enough for feeding 500,000 persons for seven months; and that number ought at least to be added to the 3,900,000 given in the above statement. On the whole, then, nearly four and a half millions of souls must have been receiving assistance, directly or indirectly, from the State at the worst period. Under this view of the case, it must be admitted that the actual distress did exceed the estimate. But in reference to the uncertainties of the case, the difference between the estimate and the probable actual is not great.

## CHAPTER V.

The narrative has, in the last chapter, been carried on to what may be termed the culminating point of the famine. In this chapter gradual decadence and ultimate extinction of the famine will be described.

The rains began about the 25th May in eastern Bengal and extended to northern Bengal, and thence to Behar, where they set in about the 5th June. They hardly began in southern and south-western Bengal till a fortnight later. They continued abundantly in northern Bengal and Behar till the 15th July.

During this period it became apparent that, in the distressed districts, the agricultural classes, ordinarily prompt and industrious on the occasions when a change in the season favours their work, were on this occasion putting forth extraordinary efforts. The land was ploughed and prepared with remarkable rapidity. The husbandmen seemed possessed with a desire to free themselves from dependence on the State by resuscitating their own means of subsistence. Some complaints were made by individual employers of the difficulty of attracting men from the relief works. Facilities were immediately afforded for obtaining the men required. In one part of north-east Tirhoot suspicion arose that some men were lingering on relief works instead of betaking themselves to their fields; this was immediately remedied. An unusually large area was sown with those crops—the early varieties of rice, the maize, the coarser millets and pulses—which would be reaped in August, and which would yield the speediest return. Much land was sown with these crops, which, from exposure to inundation, was not properly suited for them, and in which there was consequently great risk of the produce being destroyed. Still the cultivators ran that risk in the hope of obtaining resources by an early date. So intent were the people on the early sowings, that doubt began to arise as to whether due attention was being given to the preparations for the main rice crop to be reaped later. It was soon found, however, that this crop was being sown to the fullest extent possible.

Fear had sometimes been felt lest the administration of relief on a great scale should tend to demoralize a people chiefly agricultural, and to relax their zeal for husbandry. Such fear was immediately dissipated, inasmuch as the severe lessons of the famine had evidently taught them to work harder than ever, and to make the most of the first chance afforded to them by the seasons for recurring to self-help.

There was no longer any anxiety regarding the supply of seed-grain. Relief reaching to all classes had preserved the merchant from the temptation to sell his stock of seed to the hungry for food, and had deprived the cultivator of any motive for eating his seed-grain. Manifestly there was plenty of seed-grain in the country.

On the 3rd June I reminded the officers that they should lose no time in discharging from the relief works all those who might reasonably be expected

to find private employment in agriculture. Every effort was used by the local authorities for the furtherance of this object.

It was soon found that the cultivators and occupants of land did the work in their fields with their own hands to an unusually large extent, in order to save the cost of employing labour. Though a great number of field labourers found employment as usual, still, from the above cause, a considerable number remained unemployed, which circumstance, as will be presently seen, retarded the reduction of the relief labour lists.

Within a fortnight from the culminating point of the distress (some time between the 10th and 20th of June), the aggregate number of persons on charitable relief and relief works fell from 2,175,605 to 1,418,783. But while the number of those on relief works went on decreasing, the number of those on charitable relief went on increasing. Inasmuch as the number pertaining to relief works was much more important than that pertaining to charitable relief, the net decrease on the total of the two numbers was very considerable. The progressive net decrease, as the rainy season advanced, may be shown thus:—

PERIOD.	Persons on charitable relief.	Persons on relief works.	Total.
15th June	404,903	1,770,732	2,175,605
1st July	525,620	803,163	1,418,783
15th "	643,524	638,762	1,282,286
1st August	749,973	453,486	1,203,459
10th "	647,550	426,708	1,074,258
1st September	591,829	395,402	987,231
15th "	444,466	331,982	776,448
1st October	358,446	270,650	629,096
15th "	213,063	114,647	327,710
31st "	100,000	50,000	150,000

The numbers under both headings (charitable relief and relief works) fluctuated considerably in many districts. The course of decrease was sometimes arrested and turned again towards increase. For some time after the setting in of the rains, anxiety arose by reason of the constant growth of the numbers on charitable relief, and the continuance of a comparatively high number for relief works; so much so, that orders were again issued in the beginning of August for further efforts being made to discharge labourers from relief works and transfer them to private employ in the fields; also for a fresh scrutiny of the rolls of the gratuitous relief with a view to reduction. Injunctions, too, were given for further vigilance and economy in the issue of Government grain, lest the drain upon the granaries should be excessive. But soon afterwards causes arose tending to maintain both distress and relief at a high degree; and these must now be mentioned.

The rains of July, though copious in Orissa, in eastern and northern Bengal, and Behar, were very scanty in southern and south-western Bengal, comprising the partly distressed districts of Burdwan, Bankura, Beerbhoom, Moorshedabad, and Manbhook, and also the district of Hooghly, which began to suffer so much as to be counted among the distressed districts. In all these places cultivation was delayed, the usual demand for field labour failed to arise, prices became dearer, private charity ceased to support the destitute poor: in short, distress spread fast, and with it the relief work expanded, much beyond the original estimate. Thus the trouble of south-western Bengal assumed during the summer a prominent position in famine affairs, much beyond that originally contemplated. The additional allotments of Government grain for these districts were drawn from the reserve at Calcutta. The grain, though issued for charitable relief, for wages of relief labour, and sparingly for advances to

cultivators, was not sold to the public (notwithstanding many applications, direct or indirect,) as these districts are so situated as to be able for the most part to rely upon sufficient supplies of food being imported by private trade.

The prices of food-grains, though cheaper by one-sixth or seventh since the commencement of the rains, remained dear,—about double the ordinary rates for the season. There was no prospect of further abatement until the early harvest should be reaped towards the end of August. Large quantities of private grain continued to be imported (from 800 to 1,200 tons a day) by rail into Behar from Bengal and from northern India, especially from the Punjab. These supplies were taken up for the tracts on either side of the Ganges, and no share of them ever reached the upper parts of Tirhoot and Chumparun. On the other hand, when the navigation became easy on the rising of the rivers, but little private grain arrived from eastern Bengal; and this particular traffic, from which so much had been hoped, proved comparatively insufficient. Throughout Bengal the native grain merchants were disposed to hold their stocks, and to refrain from selling until the prospect of the coming harvest should be more clear.

From the setting in of the rains the relief circle officers did their utmost to carry out the instruction to discharge all able-bodied persons of either sex from the relief works. As already seen, some nine hundred thousands were so discharged or went away of their own accord within a fortnight after the setting in of the rains. But there was no employment available save field work, and that had become more restricted than usual, as already explained. Large numbers of men not belonging to the agricultural class, and still larger numbers of women and children, were unable to obtain either private employ or any custom in their own business, and were necessarily retained on the relief works. Numbers, again, were able to find work in the fields for a short time only, and that on low wages. This work over, they were forced to return to the relief works. Many, however, who were thus situated refrained from returning to relief, and sustained themselves by the surplus earnings saved by them during the active season on these works. In general terms it may be affirmed that those who could manage to support themselves did not resort to relief.

The situation for those on charitable relief before the commencement of the rains had not subsequently improved. It had become gradually worse for those who were verging on destitution. As to the higher castes, who were unsuited for manual labour, times were operating more and more hardly against them as their little resources were drained. Numbers therefore fell from these classes into the class of recipients of public charity. It is further remarkable that very many able-bodied men, who earned a reasonably good living on the relief works under the picce-work system already described, supported infirm and helpless relatives not of their immediate households. But these men, when discharged from the relief works, resorted to the fields and received the minimum wages for which such service was procurable. With such scanty earnings, and with very high prices, they were unable to support their destitute and helpless relatives, who consequently came upon charitable relief.

The rains of July sufficed to secure good early crops for August and September everywhere, except in parts of south-western Bengal. As these were reaped, the effect on the grain markets was perceptible to the benefit of most classes. The accession of new grain from this source (at the best sufficing to sustain the people for a short time only) failed to lower prices to the degree that might have been expected, by reason of a fresh trouble which was arising, and which must be described.

As the season advanced, the rains, instead of becoming heavier, according to their usual course, became lighter.

From the end of the first week in August to the end of the first week of September little rain fell anywhere in Bengal or Behar save on the line of the Ganges, in the districts of Monghyr, Bhagulpore, Purneah, and Maldah. Thus August, which should have been the wettest month in the season, proved to be an extraordinarily dry month in most parts of the country. Nor was there any rain during the first days of September. At that time the greater part of the principal rice crop (for the winter) remained to be transplanted. The crop

is sown in seed-beds among the fields. These beds become by the middle of August full of seedlings. The tender plants are then rapidly transplanted into the surrounding lands, which should have become very wet from constant rainfall and flooding. But now the first week in September was passing and yet the seedlings could not be transplanted, because the lands were dry, the soil in many places cracking into fissures from the drought. The very seed-beds were beginning to fade or wither. The transplanting had been already delayed to an extreme degree. After a very few days more drought, the process would be impossible, the consequence of which would be the failure of the principal rice crop for the second consecutive year in most of the distressed districts. It were superfluous to dilate on the crisis which was imminent. Alarm spread among the people, prices rose, and distress increased.

At the last moment rain began, about the 4th and 5th of September, in the south and south-east of Bengal, and extended to the north and to Behar, where it fell abundantly in the very places where it was most needed. It has since fallen seasonably and propitiously at intervals during September and October. The people exerted their utmost energy to effect the transplanting of the winter rice crop, which has been successfully completed almost everywhere, and the subsequent rains have rendered the prospect of the harvest as favourable as could be wished. With the reservation of possible consequences of visitations of Providence and of accidents, which cannot be foreseen, the winter crop may be described as secure in the ordinary and practical sense of the term.

In some parts of Hooghly and Burdwan, however, where the failure of rain-supply in August followed a very insufficient supply in July and June, the rain of September did not entirely save the early crop, nor fully restore the prospect of the winter crop. In such places there is and will be some slight failure of the crops. And here distress and relief operations to a limited extent will be protracted beyond the time when trouble ceases in the distressed districts generally.

As soon as the setting in of the rains caused the numbers of labourers to be diminished and the pressure upon the public works officers and their establishments to be lightened, the opportunity was taken to complete the surveys, plans and estimates of all the relief roads, which had been undertaken in the districts north of the Ganges, to consider the value and importance of the work which had been actually done, and to determine what remained to be done, in order that the roads, if not fully completed, might be practically open for traffic, and rendered permanently useful to the country. It was impossible to take these steps properly while every officer and official was absorbed in the supervision of crowds of relief labourers. The preliminary examination has been finished, and the completion of the works will be proceeded with as soon as the open season commences, after the cessation of the rains. The result of the preliminary inquiry is to show that in the districts north of the Ganges altogether about 4,000 miles of old and new road have been effectively operated upon by relief labourers; that £1,284,000 in cash and £469,000 worth of grain (or £1,753,000 in all) have been expended on relief works; that the work, though done hurriedly, and occasionally without proper surveys and plans, is of considerably better quality than had been supposed; and that all the work done by relief labour has, on the whole, cost about double as much as it would have done in ordinary years. Out of the total expenditure of 1½ millions sterling, about £650,000 were expended on tanks and about £1,100,000 on roads. The road work is estimated to be worth £5,50,000 at the labour rates of ordinary years. These results, if substantiated by the detailed measurements and estimates now being effected, will be fairly satisfactory. Some of the roads had to be aligned while the labourers were working on the lengths behind the surveyors, the price of food was more than double the rate of ordinary years, and many of the poor people who came to the relief roads were unable to do a full day's work.

In order that none of the relief works may be infructuous, I have, with the sanction of the Government of India, set apart a strong staff of Civil Engineers and their subordinates to survey all the relief roads and tanks, to complete unfinished works, to set right any mistakes of alignment or construction which the surveyors may bring to light, to build small culverts and bridges over the smaller openings, and to erect timber bridges over the moderately-sized streams, and, in short, to make all the relief roads into really useful and permanent works, so far as time and means allow. The Chief Engineer in charge of this work

hopes to accomplish it by March or April next at a cost of perhaps fourteen lakhs of rupees (£140,000). The money will have to be found by the provincial and local funds; but the work is worth doing, and now is the time to do it. If it can be satisfactorily accomplished, then the expenditure on famine relief works during 1874 will have conferred some lasting benefit on the country.

The length of 4,000 miles stated above comprises only the relief roads north of the Ganges. Besides this, there was a considerable length operated upon in the other distressed districts, which would bring the grand total nearly up to the 6,600 miles estimated in Chapter III.

Having thus brought the two categories of charitable relief and relief works to their conclusion, I have to revert to the two remaining categories of sale of Government grain and advances of Government grain to cultivators for their subsistence. These categories of sale and advances were last mentioned during the period immediately before the rains, and their progress since that period is now to be described.

It has been seen that up to the 10th of June 47,389 tons of Government grain had been sold to relief labourers and to the public under the rules of the 26th of January. This amount rose gradually to the several amounts on the dates specified below:—

	Tons.
10th July ...	74,836
10th August ...	95,858
10th September ...	116,941
1st October ...	118,107

The amount last given, 118,107 tons, may be regarded as the total sold to both relief labourers and to the public. To it will have to be added only such small amounts as may be sold after October. It is exclusive of grain given directly as wages to relief labourers.

During all May and the first week of June there was hardly any rice, and very little food grain of other kinds in the markets of the interior of north Behar and north Bengal. In these tracts the petty retail dealers found their occupation gone, and were glad to act as agents for the distribution of Government rice by sale among the people. The strange spectacle was presented of a whole class of native traders being converted into a Government agency.

When the rains set in after the first week of June, some private stocks were brought out. Of these, a part belonged to individuals, zemindars and others, and was used for the payment of wages of agricultural labour; a part belonged to traders and was sold in the market. Such sales were, however, comparatively insignificant. After a time they ceased. The markets became quite empty again, and remained so until the new grain of the August and September crops came in. The hope so much entertained of grain being brought by private traders in boats on the rising rivers was in the main disappointed. Some quantities did indeed arrive in this way, but they were not sufficiently large to produce any appreciable effect. The same preventive cause which has been already explained as deterring traders from importing grain to the most distressed tracts still prevailed, namely this, that the prices in neighbouring districts, and in Bengal generally, were too dear to admit of the importation being profitable. But as these prices had become slightly cheaper, it was deemed just to the people that the price of the Government grain (which was, under the rules, to be regulated by prices at the nearest large mart accessible by rail or river) should be lowered from one rupee for 12 seers to one rupee for 13 seers in north Behar, and to one rupee for 14 seers in northern Bengal.

The purchases of Government grain were to a considerable extent made by wholesale dealers, to whose mind the fear of another failure of the crops was ever present, and who were guided by the appearance of the weather and of the season. The purchases from the Government granaries attained their maximum weekly rate at the beginning of June, when the people determined to lay in supplies for some little time. The weekly rate, indeed, decreased immediately on the setting in of the rains; but it continued at a steadily sustained average throughout July. It fell further in the beginning of August, but towards the end of that month it showed a tendency to rise again, as the people, seeing the unfavorable state of the weather, were disposed to lay in supplies. In September, however, it decreased again,

immediately on the falling of the rains, and continued to decrease until it ceased altogether in October.

The quantity of Government grain advanced to cultivators and ryots by the 10th June has been already shown to have amounted to 14,412 tons, estimated to sustain for one month 720,000 persons of this class, including the men and their families, at the rate of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a seer ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb) of rice per diem for each member of a family. As the season advanced, men of this class, finding the stores for their subsistence to be near exhaustion, were more and more forced to ask for aid by advances of Government grain; and so the total number of applicants swelled day by day. Moreover, very many of these men had to carry on the preparation of their fields, so emergently necessary after the coming of the rains, by means of the hired labour, which, according to custom, has to be paid for in grain. Unless they could obtain advances of Government grain, they could not prepare their fields. A similar need arose again and again during the course of the agricultural season. Men who had struggled on without advances through July were forced to apply for them in August: many held out through August, but had to apply in September. Some again, who obtained small advances in May, obtained further instalments during the subsequent months. It is to be observed that large numbers of men who were discharged from the relief works and found employment as labourers in the fields received their wages for that labour in grain, which their employers had obtained as advances from Government.

The importance, then, of these advances is manifest. Without them many of the cultivators in all the distressed districts would have been too weak and emaciated to perform the cultivation properly; many would have been without seed to sow, having consumed their seed-grain for food; many would have been unable to pay for the necessary labour in the fields. Much land would have been imperfectly tilled, sown, and cared for, or left untilled altogether. When, therefore, the famine was mitigated or shortened by the strength and spirit with which the people raised fresh crops, when the return of plenty is secured by fine harvests spread over a more than ordinary large area, it is to be remembered that these results are partly due to the system of advances of grain from the Government stores.

The quantity of grain advanced to cultivators from the middle of June rose to the several quantities on the dates specified below:—

	Tons.
10th June ... . . . . .	14,412
10th July ... . . . . .	45,376
10th August... . . . . .	82,935
10th September ... . . . . .	102,828
10th October ... . . . . .	107,877

The number cannot be precisely given of the ryots and cultivators among whom the final quantity (107,877 tons) has been distributed. It is believed to be about 400,000. This number of 400,000 cultivating men represents, at the rate of six persons to a family, 2,400,000 persons belonging to the husbandman class who received help in this way.

In continuation of the statement given in a former part of this chapter, of the total number of persons receiving assistance from Government at the worst period (15th June), a similar statement may here be made for the period when the early crops began to be reaped, namely the 15th August:—

Labourers on relief works ... . . . . .	426,738
Persons on receipt of charitable relief ... . . . . .	647,550
Persons living on purchases of Government grain, being the number of people that would be supported for one month by the grain sold between the 15th July and 15th August, at the rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ of a seer per day per head ... . . . . .	1,282,464
Persons living on advances of Government grain, being the number of people that would be supported for one month by the grain advanced between the 15th July and 15th August ... . . . . .	1,692,936
Add for persons still deriving support from advances of money made to zamindars and other residents ... . . . . .	200,000
<b>Total ...</b>	<b>4,249,688</b>

It may at first sight appear remarkable that the number shown above (4½ millions) should be so slightly below the number (4½ millions) previously stated for June. A greater decrease might perhaps have been hoped for; but the continuance of the sales and the expansion of advances caused the number during August to be very high. After August the number must have rapidly declined. In a similar statement made for the end of September or the beginning of October, the last three items, namely sales and advances of both kinds (which constitute the bulk), would almost entirely disappear. The two first items only (labourers on relief works and recipients of gratuitous relief) would remain, but with shrunken proportions.

The comparative suddenness with which the sale of Government grain ceased in the beginning of October was due partly to the incoming of the new grain of the autumn harvest. It was also partly due to the popular belief in the safety of the winter crop being assured by the rain which fell at that time. The consequence was that some of the old stocks which had been withheld all through the famine were produced.

The departure of nearly all the relief labourers from the works need not excite surprise, as the work in the fields for the winter crop became most brisk.

But the discharge of the recipients of gratuitous relief proceeded more quickly than had been anticipated. Those who were able, on the revival of the general prosperity, to support themselves, had been previously discharged. Those who remained at the beginning of autumn, that is 1st to 15th September, were those who in ordinary times subsisted on private charity, and who had no livelihood of their own making. During the famine the classes who are the donors of this charity being themselves in straits, ceased to support their indigent and infirm people, who consequently came upon State relief. But with the prospect of returning plenty it became a matter of serious moment to send these poor people back to private charity. There was anxiety as to whether the ordinary donors would resume their charitable offices. However, so strong is the force of usage, almost amounting to religious obligation, that they must have begun again to give to the beggars and to the helpless their accustomed doles of food. These poor creatures have been discharged from State relief, and no harm has resulted to them. These circumstances are certainly creditable to the industrious classes.

Some reduction in the large relief establishments (specified in Chapter III) were made in August, and still more during September. As soon as the abundant rain, lasting to the very end of September, brightened the agricultural prospect, it was decided to break up the framework and machinery of relief from the beginning of October. Every exertion was made to effect this object quickly, and so to save expense. By the middle of October nearly all of these establishments ceased to be borne on the rolls. Some small establishments were maintained here and there, and some of the superior officers to guard against any untoward accident which may even yet occur.

By the beginning of October, when the autumn crops had come fully into market, the Burdwan country was the only province under the Bengal Government where relief operations were maintained on any considerable scale. Though the autumn crops had been poor and the winter crops did not promise well in the Burdwan or Hooghly districts, yet in the surrounding districts the harvests were good, and trade was brisk, therefore it was deemed advisable not to send any further supplies of Government grain to these two districts. It was ascertained that if relief labourers were paid in cash, they could buy food in the local markets, and that grain for charitable relief could be purchased locally. Accordingly orders were issued during the first week of October directing that no more Government grain should be sent to Burdwan or Hooghly from the Calcutta reserve. The authorities in those districts were instructed to pay relief labourers in cash, and to buy grain locally for charitable relief as soon as their stocks of Government grain should be exhausted.

During October the famine has declined rapidly. On the last days of the month (that is the present time of writing), the total number of those receiving assistance from Government does not exceed 150,000. Of these, the majority belong to the districts in the south—that is, in the Burdwan Division. In most



The surplus grain in the interior of the lately distressed districts is being sold to the best advantage on the spot by the local authorities. The surplus remaining out of the Calcutta reserve has been advertised for sale on specified dates under the orders of the Government of India.

The Government reserve transport train was during July and August kept in the vicinity of Durbhunga in order to recruit its strength, which had been somewhat shattered by the excessive work of May and June. It was retained chiefly as a resource against unforeseen emergency. It then performed such casual and miscellaneous duty as occurred. In the beginning of September, when the season threatened so ill, there was every reason to believe that its utmost services would be required. Soon afterwards, however, these fears were removed, and since the end of September it has been maintained only until it can be advantageously disposed of. Orders for its disposal by sale or otherwise have been given and are in train of execution.

The accounts of the famine expenditure are not yet finally completed. At this moment, therefore, the cost of the relief measures of 1874 cannot be exactly stated. All outlay has, however, almost ceased, and the accounts are so far ready that the ultimate result can be estimated approximately.

In the order of the heads of charges and receipts, as in the estimate of April 1874, given in Chapter III, there will be—

	Estimate now offered.
<b>EXPENDITURE.</b>	
Special establishments	120,000
Promotion of private grain trade	453,000
Relief works	1,280,000
Durbhunga State Railway	100,000
Government grain purchase	4,400,000
Ditto transport	1,760,000
Government reserve transport train, land and water, (net cost)	314,000
Charitable relief	280,000
Grants-in-aid of private work	10,000
Advances to zamindars, traders, &c.	460,000
Total	9,177,000
<b>RECEIPTS AND RECOVERIES.</b>	
Sales of grain to labourers and the public	950,000
Sales of grain to Relief Committees	270,000
Sales of reserve grain in Calcutta	70,000
Sale of surplus grain stocks in the interior	300,000
Recoveries of cash advances to zamindars and traders during 1874-75	250,000
Ditto ditto in 1875-76 and subsequently	210,000
Recoveries of price of grain advanced to ryots during 1874-75	25,000
Ditto ditto in 1875-76 and subsequently	600,000
Miscellaneous receipts ...	50,000
Total	2,725,000
Total expenditure	9,177,000
Total receipts	2,725,000
Net expenditure	6,452,000

There is another item of imperial receipt which may (as it seems to me) be reckoned as a set-off against the famine expenditure, and that is the increase in the net earnings of the East Indian, Jubbulpore extension, Eastern Bengal, and Punjab Railways. This increase must have been wholly due to the enormous development of the grain trade: other traffic was, in consequence of the famine, comparatively dull. The increase of the grain trade was mainly due to the Government importations and to the concession whereby Government defrayed half the freight of all private grain carried to the distressed districts; the cost of these operations is debited to the famine in the foregoing estimate under the headings of "Government grain transport" and "Promotion of private

grain trade." The railway earnings account will stand thus according to the latest available figures:—

	Total increase in the gross goods traffic earnings of the eleven months ending on the 30th September 1874, as compared with the same earnings of the corresponding months of the preceding year.	Share of the increase debitable to working expenses far as estimate can be made by the Deputy Accountant-General, Public Works Department.	Share of the additional net earnings which will accrue to Government, being one-half thereof in the case of the East Indian Railway, and a larger proportion or the whole in the case of other lines; as computed by the Deputy Accountant-General, Public Works Department.
	£.	£.	£.
East Indian Railway	880,330	286,830	440,222
Jubbulpore Extension	47,735	10,385	25,883
Eastern Bengal Railway	67,971	38,743	14,998
Scinde, Punjab Railway	176,168	24,956	151,212
Total	1,172,204	360,914	632,315

This computation does not include any part of the increased earnings on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway (£161,532 during the eleven months), though to this railway the Government paid more than £30,000 during the year on account of freight of private grain. It therefore seems quite fair to reckon the whole of the Government share of the additional net railway earnings as a set-off against the famine expenditure. If this sum be deducted from the total shown in the next preceding paragraph (£6,452,000), the final net expenditure on the famine will, according to the best estimate that can be made, amount to £5,820,000.

There do not appear to be any other charges whatever debitible to the famine. If we succeed in recovering more than 85 per cent. of the grain advances, as many local officers expect we shall, then the result will be somewhat better than the present estimate.

Further, the sum of £200,000, and possibly some additional sums, will have to be deducted from the imperial charges of the famine for reasons which I must briefly explain.

There is yet a question as to how far the whole of the cost, as above set forth, will fall upon the imperial finances of India. It was in the beginning ruled by the Government of India that the provincial finance of Bengal should be liable to be debited with the estimated amount at which the relief roads and such like works might be valued, that is to say, the real value of the works if constructed in an ordinary year; the excess cost over such value being chargeable to famine. The expenditure on these relief works was debited provisionally to the provincial finance to the amount of £450,000. As this caused some embarrassment to the provincial finance, the Government of India made a grant to the Government of Bengal of £250,000, which, deducted from the £450,000, leaves a sum of £200,000 really contributed by the provincial finance of Bengal towards the expenses of the famine. Therefore £200,000 are at all events to be deducted from the imperial cost of the famine.

But as already seen, the value of the relief roads is at present estimated at £550,000, which is, *prima facie*, a debt due by the provincial finance of Bengal to the imperial finance of India. From this amount is to be deducted £250,000 already granted by the Government of India, and £200,000 paid by the provincial finance of Bengal, leaving £100,000 still due. Whether the payment of the £100,000, by the provincial finance of Bengal (or whatever the precise amount may eventually turn out to be) will be enforced in whole or in part, must depend on the pleasure of the Government of India, which will doubtless be expressed after the accounts shall have been finally made up.

So far as is yet known, then, the cost to the Government of India of the famine may be set down at—

Not expenditure as shown above, less recovery by net traffic receipts of guaranteed railways	£
Less repayment by provincial finance of Bengal	5,820,000
	200,000
Net cost	<u>5,620,000</u>

Until the end of the year 1874-75, the losses to the general revenue from the famine of the past year cannot be stated. But it may be anticipated that there will be, in consequence of the famine, some loss on certain items of the customs revenue, a moderate loss on the excise revenue, and perhaps some small falling off in the salt revenue.

I would here testify most emphatically to the desire manifested by relief officers of all grades to be as economical as possible in dispensing Government aid whether in cash or in kind, to stop waste, and to prevent State aid being afforded to any except the really deserving and needy.

It may here be observed, that in the only three districts, namely, Bankoora, Burdwan, and Hooghly, where non-official committees could act on their own judgment, and showed what they would do if unfettered, they invariably displayed a disposition to do much more than the local officers thought necessary. These committees, which had thus to be checked in their too liberal dispensation of charitable relief, were composed of the best and most intelligent Native gentlemen of the neighbourhood. On inquiry being made why the committees wished to dispense relief so liberally, it was explained that the pressure put upon them by the local opinion of the vicinity, and by individual importunity, was too great to be resisted. This pressure was exerted, not for the sake of money, but for the sake of grain, to be dispensed in quantities too small to allow of the recipients making money-profit therefrom; and this grain, moreover, was of a kind which in ordinary years the people would hardly eat at all. Such circumstances, occurring as they did in the less distressed districts, afford striking illustrations of the keenness with which the famine was felt.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE foregoing narrative is intended to be a bare statement of the facts as they occurred, without any description of the scenes or situations which presented themselves during the course of these events, and without any discussion of the considerations which such events suggest. In this chapter I shall endeavour very briefly to describe some of the scenes and situations, and to discuss some of the considerations relating to the circumstances which have been narrated.

It will be evident to the reader that during the actual occurrence of such events there must have been many striking scenes and situations. It might even be feared that many sights, sad, shocking, terrible, must have been seen. The mere notion of swift destruction sweeping over many thousands of square miles of country, highly cultivated to the last rood of ground, and waving with crops destined never to ripen—the very name of utter and widespread famine, affecting several millions of people,—must rouse in our minds the thought of horrors indescribable. The story of such things is known to every student of Indian annals. The tradition of such calamities endures with vivid force among the people of India.

Happily, the famine of 1874 was for the most part free from circumstances of this grave character. If such things occurred at all, their occurrence was in a mitigated form, and to a limited extent. It may be that some horrors have happened of which the accounts are too imperfect and uncertain to command credence, or of which we have never heard and shall never hear. Nevertheless there must unavoidably have been very much of misery to stir the depth of human sympathy. Visiting authorities have found many families of many villages in destitution near to starvation. Relief administrators inspecting crowds of poor have seen the affecting spectacle of women and little children in the last stage of emaciation. Medical examiners scrutinizing the field hospitals, the poor-houses, the relief centres, have made professional reports of physical depression in whole classes. Here and there corpses of hunger-stricken persons have been found, and sometimes the reports of deaths from famine have been authenticated. All these things are, indeed, sad to be recalled; but much worse things even than these might have happened, which it is unnecessary to imagine. The object of the operations undertaken by Government, of the administrative efforts made, of the financial cost incurred, was to prevent these things from

happening so far as might be humanly possible. It will be for others to judge how far that object was attained.

There were, however, many remarkable points of interest at various stages of the affair, some of which I will mention here, having seen them or heard them described by competent witnesses.

In north Behar the rice crop is raised in vast hollows or depressions in the surface of a slightly undulating country. From any low eminence the view extends over many square miles of rice harvest, a fine spectacle in ordinary years. But in the autumn of 1873 the crop grew up, then faded, and at last withered. Its colour became brown, deepening by the effect of distance into red. The unnatural aspect of such apparently endless expanses of cultivation, the presage of the coming desolation, produced a striking, almost an appalling, effect on the beholders.

... In north Bengal many spots on the banks of the inland rivers are formed into quays for the exportation of the surplus rice. These places in ordinary years become scenes of cheerful activity, and are the centres of the life of the country. The contrast which they presented of utter deadness and desertion towards the end of 1873 was deplorable. The rice country generally abounds with luxuriant groves of bamboos, the green masses of which form one of the most characteristic features of that region. In the drought of 1873-74 these innumerable trees dried up and perished down to their roots. They will recover, or there will be reproduction. But at the time their parched and wasted appearance, notoriously portentous according to native ideas, added to the prevailing gloom of the situation.

On the river Hooghly at Calcutta, and at the railway stations on its banks, there was much scope for energy and organisation in unloading the rice ships and loading the bags on to the railway trucks. At one time there were simultaneously as many as seventeen steamers and ships laden with Government rice in the port of Calcutta, with from 200 to 2,000 tons of rice on board of each. The bags of grain were carried away from the steamers by lighters, to the railway wharves, whence they were to be despatched to the north. This work had to be done on a broad river, with a tide that runs sometimes five miles an hour, and to be finished promptly to save demurrage of the steamers. The rice ships often came into harbour in convoys, and converging as they did on Calcutta from so many distant ports, there would occasionally be a block or accumulation of 3,000 tons of rice on one wharf, 2,000 tons on another, and 1,000 tons on a third; while scores of lighters were waiting at each to unload additional quantities. The bustle, the noise, the crush, were extreme. Again each bag had to be carried on a man's back from the lighter to the shore, and from the shore into the railway trucks, the men swarming like bees up the steep bank. Sometimes 45,000 or 50,000 bags had to be lifted daily across a wharf space of barely 100 yards. Sometimes, for a day or so, it would seem as if the business of unloading and despatching the grain could never be managed on the narrow wharves. But the arrival of rice ships would slacken for a brief time: all the vessels in the river would be unloaded, and the accumulation would be cleared before fresh consignments arrived. From 2,000 to 3,000 tons of Government rice were cleared daily from ship-board for weeks together. Demurrage was incurred in only one instance, and was mainly due to the arrival of 10,000 tons of Saigon rice at one time in mat bags, which burst in the holds of the vessels. In two instances only were the rice loads of lighters lost, notwithstanding the strength of the tide and the stress of work. One ship from Madras with 2,000 tons went down.

The banks of the Ganges in Behar, which formed the great base of our transport operations, presented scenes of much animation. On the south bank temporary branches or sidings from the main railway line were constructed on to the very ridge of the high river-bank, where long sheds were erected for sheltering the bags of rice piled up in long series of heaps. Wooden slides were constructed, stretching down the steep bank, so that the bags might shoot straight from the goods' platform to the deck of the steamers lying in the stream. At that spring season violent winds from the west (hot as furnace blasts) blow over the broad river-bed (several miles in average breadth) from morning to evening, filling the air with dusty haze and obstructing navigation for all vessels

save those propelled by steam. From eventide the winds subside until the morning. But navigation in the shifting and tortuous channels was impossible during the dark hours, so the work had to be done either by steamers laden together with their barges (called "flats"), or else by steamers towing country craft. It was interesting to see a steamer tugging against wind and stream a far-stretching string of, perhaps, twenty country boats. On the other side, the steamers would meet the Durbhunga railway, which had been carried across the low sands to the water's edge, the steam vessel lying almost alongside of the railway engine. As the river rose gradually, the waters encroaching on the sands would drive back the railway line a few yards day by day.

On the north bank the main depots could be descried from afar by the clouds of ascending dust. Day and night there was a ceaseless creaking and rolling of carts, incoming empty and outgoing laden. The great length of sheds which had been erected was often insufficient for the bags that arrived, which were then heaped into pyramids from 60 to 80 feet high.

The lines of the carts extended continuously over many miles. A traveller might traverse say 20 miles of country and meet with uninterrupted strings of carts throughout the whole distance. Every one of the streams (which though very low were still running clear in that region) was blocked by cartmen stopping to water their cattle. Every one of the roadside mango groves, which abound in that quarter, was crowded with men and animals packed close together for temporary repose and shade. At evening the darkness of the groves would be lit up by the cooking fires. The roadways were cut by the cart wheels into ruts from 2 to 3 feet deep (called "leeks"). The carts could not move unless they followed the ruts. Fortunately most of the carts were of an uniform build. But whenever carts of a different build came into the field, there actually arose questions of cart gauge, broad and narrow, and the transport department would be obliged to carve out fresh roadways wherein the carts of a particular breadth might work out their own ruts.

More interesting still, perhaps, was the assembling and mustering of the many contingents of carts in the country around Durbhunga and Mudhobunnee during February 1874. The rough tracks and lanes form a network of communication in that region. Every line was covered by the bands of carts, each several thousand strong, converging from every direction. The troops of men, with their carriage gathered with alacrity at central stations. All seemed to understand the vital moment of the enterprise on which they were entering. At first the groves and tanks of the central stations afforded shade and water even for these masses. But soon these places became choked with the dust from the arid, friable soil trodden by countless feet. The foliage of the trees became encrusted and brown with layers of dust; the tanks would be drained to their dregs of fetid mud; the air was thick with particles of earth flying in the fervid blasts of the summer wind. Throughout the twenty-four hours of the day the business had to be prosecuted, and order had to be maintained among the masses of men, animals, and carts, whether at rest or in motion. Side by side with this were the field hospitals for the people and for the beasts—for the sun-stricken, the foot-sore, the over-fatigued, the exhausted, the ailing, and the sick. During the hottest hours of the day European officers on horseback were recovering stragglers, urging on the backward and encouraging the forward.

The appearance of the cattle, both for draught and burden, was in the beginning splendid. For them the drought, which destroyed the ear of the rice plant, had spared the stubble for fodder. The sap and strength of the plant had remained in the stem; so that the stubble fodder was more than ordinarily nourishing. This accounted for the excellent condition of the cattle. Certainly sleeker, sturdier beasts could hardly be seen. A very few weeks of transport service changed all this. But though they lost flesh and appearance, they showed muscle and power to the end.

Towards the close of the hot weather, when the lowering clouds gave warning of the downpour which would damage all grain it might find exposed, the haste and hurry to store the rice bags in the granaries became intense.

At some of the depots, which were latest filled, streams of laden carts, camels, mules, and ponies, would pour in much faster than the loads could be disposed of under cover. In the still heat of the heavy air, with all the signs of quick-coming rain-storms, the efforts made by the people to house the grain produced an almost wild excitement.

At the opening of the relief operations in many places the population massed itself upon the relief works. Multitude after multitude came trooping across the fields. Every hamlet sent forth a mournful procession of hungry people. Large villages would be searched through and through, but not a soul would be found in the deserted homesteads, save some few who could not stir, and who were resigning themselves to the fate to which they apparently had been abandoned. When the people thus came herding and flocking to certain points on the roads, sitting helpless on the ground by day, and bivouacking on the spot by night, the difficulty was to marshal them in to anything like order, so that they might be counted, arrayed in gangs, set to labour, supervised in their work, and paid when the day's task was over. Sometimes, when questions arose as to the terms of work and payment, our officers would find it almost impossible to obtain a hearing amidst the vociferations of the men and the screaming of the women and children. The proneness to alarm, the sense of pressing danger, even the heat and glare of the weather, added vigour and vivacity to the tumult. Evening after evening, as the hour for payment came round, the unruly throng would press round the paymasters, grasping for copper coin. Soon this confusion, through the perseverance of our officers, gave place to quietness and order. Then the multitudes would be seated on the ground, row after row, thousand upon thousand, in silence broken only by occasional exclamations of misery, to be inspected with patient and leisurely regularity by the relief officer, and to be told off, some to the poor-houses, some to light labour, spinning and weaving, some to village tanks, some to the roads, according to the discrimination of the physical fitness of each person.

When the Government granaries near the villages were opened for all to come and buy, it was strange to watch the purchasers congregating in numbers, beyond the power of the store-keepers to serve with sufficient quickness, waiting anxiously but quietly till their turn should come, the widows tendering their mites in payment, the infirm and aged stretching forth the cloth to receive the full measure of grain.

Stranger still, perhaps, was it to see the larger depots of Government stores attended by all the wholesale and retail dealers of the neighbourhood, who would be settling all their grain transactions and almost turning the depot enclosure into a sort of local exchange until their own proper trade should revive.

The contrast afforded by the commencement of the rainy season after the long protracted drought was enough to equal the happiest anticipations.

In the distressed districts north of the Ganges the last days of May were distinguished by a heated dust-laden atmosphere; by scanty ploughing and sowing; by anxiety for seed; by navigable streams reduced to lowest ebb; by empty tanks and dried-up wells, to the distress of men and the detriment of cattle; by grain markets becoming tighter and tighter, prices hardening, and private stores locked up; by an intense demand for Government grain, both for wholesale and retail, as if all were anxious to lay in supplies at once for some time beforehand; by private trade stagnant, and traders holding out no promise of importation; by labouring and agricultural classes coming in greater numbers than ever to relief works; by the lists of gratuitous and charitable relief much swollen; by ryots and cultivators clamorous for advances of food-grain; by a large proportion, in some places one-half, in other places three-fourths, of the population receiving assistance from Government in some shape, or from charitable subscriptions, physically in good condition from extraneous aid, but morally depressed and fearful for the future; by relief establishments everywhere strained to the utmost to meet the demands upon them; by transport operations consisting of the final struggle towards the attainment of a long deferred object; by doubts as to whether even the largest allotments of

Government grain would carry the people through the months that must be passed before the winter harvest.

The last days of June were, on the contrary, distinguished by rain; by masses of cloud promising further downpour, even to excess; by saturated soil; by extensive ploughing and sowing of every crop of the season, and general sufficiency of seed; by tanks and wells filling fast, to the refreshment of man and beast; by grain markets still tight, but with an inclination to become easier, no stores indeed produced by traders, but landholders and private persons evidently bringing their hoards into use; by a demand for Government grain diminished and limited more according to the needs of the present moment; by traders collecting their boats and promising importation as soon as the rising streams should afford the necessary means; by labourers and husbandmen all gone from the relief works to the busy fields, leaving only some of the women and children on the works; by the lists of gratuitous and charitable relief still swollen; by ryots and cultivators obtaining advances of food-grains, those who could from their landlords, and those who could not from the relief officers; by a diminution of the proportion of the people receiving assistance from Government; by a general manifestation of feeling that peril from drought was for the present stayed; by relief establishments partially freed from out-door avocations and with more leisure to complete returns and accounts; by transport operations nearly over and granaries filled; by confidence that, unless some new trouble should supervene, the allotments of Government grain would prove sufficient to the end.

I now advert to some of the considerations relating to the famine of 1874. Whether the preservation of the people from the destructive consequences of that calamity should be undertaken by the State was an imperial question beyond the power of the local Government of Bengal to decide. The Government of India determined from the beginning that this should be undertaken with every effort and at any sacrifice, in order to avoid risk with a reasonable degree of certainty, and to secure success so far as human means might avail. It was under this view and upon this understanding that the scheme of operations was conceived and worked out in all its details. Much of course may have been done amiss in the management of such multifarious affairs. As regards the means adopted and the steps taken for the proposed end, it is for others, and not for me, to judge whether any essential mistakes have been made in the way of doing either too little or too much, of falling below, or of going beyond, the requirements of the case on the fundamental principles which had been laid down for our guidance. But if any mistakes have been made in conducting the operations, then it will perhaps be remembered that many (though not all) of the parts of the undertaking had an unprecedented character. Many things were to be accomplished the like of which had never been attempted before. However great may have been the knowledge and practice of the many persons of all classes engaged in this service, still no person could possibly have had the actual experience needed in order to foresee the issue or the entire effect of the measures which had to be adopted.

The lessons learnt in one famine may doubtless be most useful for successfully encountering similar conjunctures in future. But during this famine no particular method has proved to be applicable in all the places concerned. On the contrary, divers methods have been used in the varying circumstances of the several tracts of country. In Bengal and Behur the calamity assumed different aspects, according to the products, the trade, the landed tenures, and the habits of the people. Therefore a similar calamity occurring in other parts of India might present even wider differences. Moreover, any one famine is almost sure to be, in many important particulars, unlike every other calamity of the same general description. It seems certain that a famine at once deep and broad results only from a conjunction of many causes, the convergence of many adverse forces. This has been manifest in the Bengal famine of 1874. If, while the province of Behur was afflicted with scarcity, Bengal had been blessed with average harvests, the disaster in Behur might have failed to produce famine; but we have seen that Bengal was suffering from scarcity at the same time. If the scarcity had befallen those parts of Bengal where the agricultural classes are possessed of resources, as in the

eastern districts, the people might have sustained themselves with but little extraneous aid, instead of being reduced almost wholly to dependence on the State ; but this calamity befell those tracts in Behar where the agricultural classes were in a lower status than in any other part of the country, and those parts of northern Bengal where the people do not possess the advantages of the jute fibre culture. If the failure of rain had occurred in districts where harvests are reaped in spring as well as in early winter, then there would have been some chance of gain in one harvest retrieving the loss in the other; but the tracts most severely visited were just those where there could be no spring crops to make up for the loss of the main winter crops. If the worst failure had happened in those parts of Bengal which are traversed by railways or by rivers navigable at all seasons, there would have been hope either that succour would arrive through private trade, or that such supplies as might be despatched by Government would be transported easily ; but utter failure of rain and crops occurred in the very tracts which are most remote from easy communication. It was this concatenation of difficulties which intensified the famine of 1874, and which compelled Government to adopt preventive measures so searching, so laborious, and so costly.

In averting the consequences of famine the necessity of using extreme haste is most oppressive to those charged with the administration, and produces inevitable excess in expenditure of resources of all kinds. If the failure could be certainly foreseen even a few weeks before its arrival, or if when it was foreseen the Government could commence large preparations, trouble might be saved in an almost inestimable degree ; but this can never be. Failure dreaded for weeks may be averted by rain even at the last moment. Early in September 1873 fears began to be felt, and grew more and more acute as October advanced, but a fall of rain even late in October might have re-established everything. In regard to efficiency of preparations by Government, the time for that was in the autumn. But to set them on foot before the scarcity had declared itself for certain, would have had an evil effect. When the arrival of scarcity within a given time has become certain, the Government cannot properly begin to display all its power, to call forth all its resources ; for if it does so trade will be paralysed or impeded at the outset, and the people might at once learn the too easy lesson of foregoing self-help and leaning altogether on the State. It is only by trade being stimulated to supply a vast and emergent demand, by the people being incited by the motive of self-preservation, that the danger can be restricted to those limits within which the Government may effectually interfere. If, then, the measures ultimately adopted by Government had been taken in hand at a much earlier date, the gain in economy and efficiency would have been insignificant as compared with the mischief which might have ensued from the discouragement of private enterprise. In practice, therefore, the measures, however much they may have been considered beforehand, cannot be put into execution until the latest safe moment for decisive action has arrived. The excessive urgency which will then arise must be very disadvantageous, especially in transport arrangements. It multiplies the chances of failure and enhances considerably the expense. But it must be endured, as it springs from the very nature of the trial and from the essence of the case.

In the urgency thus admitted to be inseparable from a great undertaking of this nature, the use of railways in India is conspicuous. On former occasions of this nature, the railways have proved very valuable. On this occasion, however, it is difficult to describe fully the usefulness of their services. It may suffice to say that without the railways the operations against this famine could not have been adequately carried out. The supplies of grain coming either from distant places beyond sea, or from the northern extremity of India, had to be conveyed by rail for distances ranging from 150 to 450 miles to the borders of the distressed country.

The task of systematically feeding almost the whole population of tracts of country containing two or three millions of souls, or even a higher number than that, should not, of course, be accepted by Government save under the most exceptional circumstances, and under the paramount necessity of saving human life. Though undertaken on this occasion for many of the distressed districts, it has not been undertaken for all of them. Many distressed districts

have been managed by other methods. But evidently in many cases the thorough and absolute remedy for famine, by Government supplying the people with food, may be most desirable, if it be practicable. As it had never, perhaps, been tried before, its practicability would probably have been doubted until proved by trial. At the outset the most sanguine of those engaged in such a task doubtless felt some misgivings as to its entire success. There is, however, no longer any doubt as to its being perfectly practicable. It can be accomplished with entire regularity for many months consecutively by disbursing cash, so long as supplies and trade last, and when these fail by distributing, paying, selling, and advancing Government grain. And the demonstration of this problem may be regarded as one of the experiences which the events of 1874 will store up for the future.

Large as may be the official machinery for the administration of any broad system of relief, the experience of 1874 shows the possibility of enlisting powerful forces of voluntary assistance. If in the most distressed tracts the work is mainly done by official agency, yet in less distressed tracts private agency to the utmost extent can be, as it has been, brought into play. The zemindar, the planter, the landholder, the merchant, the trader, the head villager, have all rendered service in their respective spheres.

The enforcement of labour tests, the establishment of poor-houses, the issue of cooked or prepared food, were the topics of much discussion at the outset of the operations of 1874. I shall recapitulate the results of the experience gained regarding these subjects during the operations.

I understand the enforcement of the labour test to mean this, that before gratuitous relief is afforded to any applicant enquiry is made as to whether the person can do any work, light or heavy; and if the person can, then such work is imposed as may be appropriate to the age, sex, or condition. If this be the labour test, then it has been invariably enforced from beginning to end of the operations. Hundreds of thousands of persons of both sexes, of all ages, of various degrees of health, strength, and weakness, have been successfully subjected to it.

The term "establishment of poor-houses" may be used in two senses. If the plan means the constructing of tolerably commodious buildings, even though of a temporary sort, the collecting therein of considerable numbers (say some hundreds, or even thousands) of poor or miserable people, and the managing of the house as an institution on a large scale, then it has never been adopted by Government during the famine of 1874; though there have been some institutions conducted by eminent individuals which in some respects come under the above description. There may be many circumstances under which measures of this sort can be beneficially adopted in preference to any other method of coping with distress. That particular position of affairs did not present itself in the distressed districts on this occasion. But if the plan means the constructing of a small, though salubrious, temporary structure, in which are placed a very limited number (say less than fifty) of poor persons unable to do any out-door work, though not ill enough to be sent to hospital, or unable to walk from their home to fetch food, or having no house to shelter them, or belonging to no village where they could conveniently receive house relief,—then it has been adopted in very many places scattered all over the distressed districts. It has been seen in the last chapter that those recipients of gratuitous relief who could be relieved without being placed in a poor-house were given tickets entitling them to so many rations of grain to be issued from the nearest Government granary.

The issue of cooked or prepared food was much discussed at an early stage of the relief operations. The question was raised whether gratuitous relief ought not to be given in the shape of cooked food. It was argued that in India none would come to a public place for cooked food unless they were really in want, and that the distribution of cooked food would be a test or a check against imposture. On the other side it was explained that needy people of the middle class, respectable widows, and the like, could never thus come; yet there were many people of this class who required relief and must die if they did not receive it. It was decided that charitable relief might be given in the shape of cooked food or uncooked food, according as the local committee or local relief official might think best. When severe famine visited a tract it was impossible to enforce

any cooked food test or to adequately relieve the people except by distributing grain enough for a week's or a fortnight's consumption at a time to every person or family found to be in want. When it is remembered that in a single circle of about one hundred villages there were from 5,000 to 23,000 persons supported by charitable relief, the preparation of cooked food for all these would have been a serious addition to the work of relief. But cooked food was given to inmates of relief hospitals, and to the cripples who lived at the poor-houses.

Towards the end of the distress, when it was desirable to throw the people back on their own resources, and to send the paupers and cripples to their ordinary supporters, the gradual enforcement of the cooked food test was salutary. In towns like Burdwan and Cutwa a class of fever-stricken poor had for some time existed; and there cooked food had to be distributed daily to hundreds who had hardly strength to cook for themselves.

The selection of the most suitable sorts of relief works for the employment of the poor has occupied much thought. At the outset road-works proved decidedly the best for the accommodation of masses of hungry people suddenly arriving. These people could all settle down on one part or other of the road, and could be in some way counted and paid up every evening. When, after the multitudes had been reduced to order, large numbers of them were brought back to their respective villages, relief work on tanks (new or old) was found to be the most appropriate employment. There was a new tank to be dug or an old tank to be deepened within reach of most villages; and it was much easier to enlist the services of local notables and village headmen in supervising work on tank works than on roads. There is this drawback to tank works, that they benefit a small locality and a few people rather than the public generally, and are not therefore such fitting objects for public expenditure as roads.

The large works constructed on high engineering principles, such as canals and railways, will not be very serviceable as relief works in the earlier stages of distress, unless portions of the works are carefully set aside for the reception of weakly persons. Such arrangements can generally be made, and were actually carried out, on the Sone canal, the Northern Bengal State Railway, and the Gunduk embankment. Apart from such undertakings being necessarily concentrated over single lines of country, they are ordinarily done by petty contract. It is contrary to the interest of contractors to employ persons who cannot do a good day's work; and this tendency has to be counteracted. When the relief labourers become strong and healthy, they can with advantage be drafted to railways and canals.

The choice between different modes of paying for relief labour has, as shown in Chapter IV, caused much anxiety. There were three plans, namely, "daily wages," whereby a person having laboured for so many hours receives a wage, whether the result of the work has been much or little; "task-work," whereby a person receives a daily wage for an allotted task, but is liable to reduction of wage if the performance falls short; "piece-work," whereby a person is paid for the quantity of work done and measured up, much or little, according to a fixed rate. The daily wage plan renders it difficult to enforce a proper amount of labour, and is open to manifold abuses. It is permissible at the outset only, until the people can be taught to follow better plans. The task-work is better, but it has one fault—in that it fails to offer any inducement for special and extra exertion, or for self-improvement in skill.

The "piece-work" plan was found the best on every account. As regards facility of supervision, prevention of cheating, and economy of money, it is excellent for the sake of the works; but for the sake of the people also it is preferable to any other plan. It offers a stimulus to extra exertion and self-improvement, and conduces to industrial training. By holding out the prospect of gain, it makes the relief labourers work harder, perhaps, than they had ever worked before. It teaches them to save something from their earnings, and to exercise forethought. Its good effects were exemplified in the conduct of the relief labourers during May and June, as described in Chapter IV. And when the expenses of relief works are examined, it is found that even when the piece-work rates were twice as high as in ordinary years, the work done cost

less than under the daily wage system, when the rates were kept down to the low standard of ordinary years. The experience of 1874 seems to show that piece-work, even at high rates if necessary, should always be introduced on relief works at the earliest possible moment.

The sale of Government grain to the public, wholesale and retail, has been an important element in the policy of relief administration of 1874.

Even in the most distressed districts there were some whole classes, and many individuals in other classes, who had money, or the means of raising it, but who could not obtain food for it. The sale of Government grain to such people relieved the pressure on relief works and on charitable relief, promoted self-help, and maintained self-respect among the middle classes, agricultural or non-agricultural, and materially reduced the burden on the public treasury. In Mudhoobunnee, where the failure of the crops was most severe, the sales of Government grain were largest. To any one watching the sales at the petty granaries, it was remarkable to see what numbers of people, who to all external appearance were paupers, produced or raised money and bought their food rather than ask for charitable relief. Widows, aged persons, children, and unlikely people of all classes, seemed either to have brought out old hoards, or to have raised money somewhere, wherewith to buy food at the Government granaries. If Government grain had not been for sale, these poor people could hardly have bought at the famine rates which would have prevailed, and they must have either died or have swelled the lists of the people on relief works and on charitable relief. Numbers of instances were related of widows who had sold their last remaining ornaments so as to be able to buy food for themselves and keep their names off the pauper lists. In some cases these poor creatures, when they could not afford to pay the full Government price, begged to be allowed to pay at reduced rates rather than be put on the list of paupers who got their food for nothing. These grain sales secured the return of one million sterling out of the money expended by Government on bringing grain into the country. Certainly the people themselves believe the sale of Government grain to have been among the most useful measures which the Government adopted for the relief of distress.

There must always arise the question whether the sale of Government stores is detrimental to private trade. Certainly no effort has been spared to prevent the measure producing any such ill effect. It has been adopted, as shown in Chapter IV, in those places only where there was no private trade in food-grain and no prospect of any arising. If the opinion of native merchants and grain-dealers may be taken as conclusive, I may say that in Bengal and Behar generally, and the distressed tracts particularly, they were all in favour of the measure with the conditions under which it was carried out. More valuable still than the opinion of the trade are its practice and action, as seen already in Chapter IV. Nothing, indeed, could have exceeded the activity of the import trade of grain in the distressed districts generally during the time when the sales of Government grain were at their maximum. From parts of Bengal, such as Mymensingh and Julpigoree, where the crops had been fairly good, private exportation into the distressed districts during the early part of the season was so very brisk that in May and June trouble arose in these exporting tracts, and scarcity was for a time keenly felt. Rarely or never has so brisk an importation of grain been witnessed in Behar as that which occurred in the summer of 1874. It could not, indeed, have possibly been greater from the north-west quarter, inasmuch as it took up all the available railway carriage. The merchants sent their grain as near as they could to the most distressed tracts. Their conduct showed that they had no fear whatever of being interfered with or undersold by Government in any place whither they could manage to despatch their grain. The injunctions which had been given to the local authorities to stop the sales on the arrival of private grain were carefully made known to the merchants and to the public. In the end the sales of Government grain ceased of themselves by the action of local trade underselling the Government. As private supplies made their appearance in the market during the autumn, the prices of private grain became cheaper; while the price of Government grain was purposely kept at the comparatively

dear rates which had been adopted in July, so as to give the best opportunity for the revival of local trade. The new rice and the remnant of old stocks began to be offered at cheap rates, so the people at once purchased private grain and ceased to buy the Government grain. Thus the Government operations did not prevent or check the resumption by the trade of its proper functions. On the whole, it may be affirmed that the sale of Government grain did not improperly interfere with private trade.

It may, of course, be argued that Government, by interposing at all to prevent famine, and consequently by averting the prevalence of famine prices, must to a certain extent have interfered with trade. But any doubtful advantage which trade might have gained if Government had refrained from interposing, would have been much more than counterbalanced by the loss of life and the diminution in production which must have ensued. And, dominating all these considerations, there is the moral principle that it is, in the last resort, the duty of Government to save the lives of its people. But the result proves that Government, while on the one hand exerting the interposition sufficiently for the preservation of the people, restrained it on the other hand within legitimate limits. Inasmuch as the private importation exceeded the Government importation, it is evident that, great as were the efforts of Government, the efforts of all the traders combined were greater still. Indeed the Government itself had the strongest interest in evoking the assistance of trade for the prevention of the famine. That assistance was essential to the accomplishment of the objects in view, and it was ultimately rendered to a vast and beneficial extent.

The policy of granting advances of food-grain to ryots and cultivators on a large scale has perhaps both novelty and interest. The situation was this, in a vast number of cases ryots or tenant-cultivators had no grain and no means of obtaining it. Though the larger landlords advanced grain to their tenantry, the smaller landowners, who own in the aggregate a great portion of the lands of the country, were unable to do so. The village grain-dealers, who would ordinarily make such advances, either had no grain to advance or refused to advance what they had until the prospect of the next crop should be assured. The cultivators were much employed in the transport of the Government grain; they also laboured on relief works. But the time came when they must leave all such employment for their fields. For carrying on the cultivation they must have grain not only for themselves, but also for giving wages in kind to their field labourers. Unless, therefore, advances of grain were made to them by Government, agriculture must suffer, and the new crop must for want of husbandry be short, notwithstanding abundance of rain. The policy, then, of thus advancing Government grain was clear. Its working and effects have been described in Chapter IV. It is among the causes which have brought about the speedy and satisfactory termination of the famine of 1874. So far experience attests the advantage of adopting it in similar emergencies. It remains to be seen whether the money value of these advances will be duly recovered. Instructions have been issued for the realization of some instalment, however small, at the coming winter harvest, so that the people may be reminded that Government intends to hold them to their bond. It has been assumed in the financial estimates that 85 per cent. of these advances will be recovered. The local officers report that the recoveries may even exceed this proportion, and that the people feel grateful for the concession, and evince entirely a disposition to repay.

In reference to the issue of food-grain by Government to the people in distressed districts or provinces, whether gratuitously, or in wages for public work, or by sale, or in advances, or by all modes together, it is to be borne in mind that these processes, singly or collectively, must affect prices of all food-grains, not only in those districts and provinces, but also in neighbouring places. It is indeed impossible to define the area or distance to which such influence may extend, but the extent must be considerable. Comparisons are sometimes made between the prices of food-grains which have prevailed in

Behar and northern Bengal (into which provinces vast quantities of Government grain have been poured) during 1874 with the prices which have prevailed during the same period in neighbouring portions of the North-Western Provinces, and in other parts of Bengal, where no Government grain was sent. Surprise seems to have been sometimes felt that with all the scarcity of private grain in north Behar and in other distressed places, with all the impending misery and mortality averted only by Government aid, the prices, quoted in the local markets for other food-grains as well as rice, should have been not essentially dearer than those quoted in other districts where distress was but slight, or did not exist at all, and should not have reached the high prices that ruled in previous famines. Such comparisons, however, are manifestly inapplicable to the circumstances of the case. It was the policy of Government, and nothing else but that, which prevented prices in Behar in 1874 from becoming dearer than those of Hindoostan, and from reaching the rates of former famines. This policy in Behar acted indirectly to prevent prices in the immediately adjoining districts of the North-Western Provinces rising in sympathy with Behar rates. If there had been no importation by Government, Behar would have attracted an excessive quantity of grain from those districts, and would so have caused prices there to touch famine rates. Nothing short of this policy could save the mass of human life which was in jeopardy. The Government poured into the distressed districts 460,000 tons of grain, and by paying a part of the railway charges assisted private dealers to import 530,000 tons more. The importation by Government kept down prices in north Behar. The private importation, thus encouraged by Government, kept down prices in south Behar. The Government grain was distributed in all the remoter and more distressed tracts, and was sold to the public at rates adjusted according to the prices of neighbouring marts. When wholesome Burmah rice was to be had at these rates close to every village, the common rice of the country, though preferred to Burmah rice, must necessarily follow that standard. In short, the Government was obliged in parts of north Behar to take into its own hands the supply of food for the people. It is therefore manifestly impossible to compare the prices of a place and a time, wherein Government so seriously and potentially interposed, with the prices of other places and other times, wherein there has not been such interposition.

In the tracts south of the Ganges, where little Government grain was stored, the vast quantities of grain imported with the help of Government by private dealers from the cheap districts of northern India could be sold with profit at rates cheaper than famine prices.

In the most distressed districts the supplies of food were regulated by the operations of the Government, acting for the safety of the people, within the limited area of interference. The pertinent question, therefore, is not what the prices were with State interposition, but what they would have been without it. Referring to this question, I subjoin a statement showing the range of prices in seven of the larger districts during the recent scarcity as compared with prices ruling in ordinary years and in the famine of 1866. It will be seen that, on the whole, prices were in 1874 quite twice as dear as they are in ordinary years. In the early part of the season, before the forces of Government had come fully into the field, prices were dearer during the recent scarcity of 1873-74 than during the corresponding months of the last famine of 1865-66; but from April to June quotations were much the same during both years. In other words, the tendency to an excessive dearness dangerous to life was checked in 1874, doubtless by reason of the proceedings of the Government. Then during July, August, and September of 1874, food was much cheaper than it was during the same months of 1866. Those months were in 1866 a time of very short stocks, of very high prices, of much misery, and of some starvation; whereas in 1874 the efforts of Government, seconded by private trade, sustained the people in fair condition, and kept prices considerably cheaper than starvation rates. According to the analogy of 1866, the failure of December 1873 and the prices of the four subsequent months must have been

followed by starvation rates in the summer and autumn of 1874 if Government had not interposed.

NAME OF DISTRICT.	NUMBER OF SEERS OF COMMON RICE SOLD FOR ONE RUPEE IN											
	DECEMBER.		FEBRUARY.		APRIL.		JUNE.		JULY.		SEPTEMBER.	
	Average good year. 1865.	1873.	Average good year. 1866.	1874.								
Tirhoot	23	14	12	22	12	9	21	9	9	18	9	16
Chittagong	20	10	13	26	10	9	23	9	9	29	9	11
Serap	20	18	12	20	13	8	19	12	12	20	11	12
Monghyr	24	14	13	23	12	9	20	9	12	19	10	10
Purneah	30	18	10	26	16	8	28	12	10	35	9	10
Rungpore*	29	22	14	27	16	11	26	16	8	23	15	22
Dinagepore*	34	19	14	30	20	14	30	15	8	27	15	8

\* The famine of 1866 was but little felt in the districts of Dinagepore and Rungpore.

In fact, however, it is attested by all classes of witnesses that the failure of crops in 1873-74 was very much greater than in 1865-66, both as regards extent of area and losses within that area. It may therefore be presumed, almost with certainty, that had affairs been left to follow an uninterrupted course, the prices of 1874 would have been much higher, and the distress much more intense, than in 1865-66.

Even with all our efforts, very high prices did occasionally obtain in limited tracts and under exceptional circumstances. So early as March common rice had risen to seven seers per rupee in parts of Tirhoot, before the Government granaries were opened. In May, when the entire machinery of relief was in play, prices more than once rose to one rupee for seven seers at Mozafferpore, the capital of Tirhoot. In May also a sudden outburst of distress occurred in an unexpected quarter of Purneah: the Government granaries were cleared out, and the price of common rice stood at five to six seers per rupee until further Government supplies arrived. In the Jalgoree district prices ranged from five to seven seers per rupee for a fortnight before the Government grain arrived. Calcutta merchants, who had been concerned in the Orissa famine, predicted most confidently, before the Government policy had been fully declared, that prices in Calcutta would reach seven and eight seers per rupee before the trouble was over.

I believe that none conversant with the facts can doubt that common rice would have been selling at five and six seers per rupee for months together over large tracts of Behar and Bengal if Government had not imported grain largely, and had not successfully promoted importation by trade. In the worst part of north Behar indeed, and in many other places from time to time, prices must have become even dearer than those last mentioned, until at last grain ceased to be procurable at any price. In such dire event, the people would have swayed hither and thither in a wild quest of food. Those who could move would have fled elsewhere, causing accession to the growing mass of misery wherever they went, or lying down to die by the way; those who could not move, would have perished in their homes. Such prices would after a time have attracted supplies by trade, but before the arrival of such supplies a large portion of the people would have been dead.

It is always to be remembered in India that the effect of any given price of food upon the people largely depends on their circumstances, such as the proportion of culturable to cultivated land, the incidence of the population on such land, the quality and value of the articles exported, the influx of money in payment for exports, the demand for labour, the rate of wages, and the like. Again, the effect much depends on the growth, continuance, or permanency of

these circumstances. If dearness of food arises from such causes as these, the people bear up against it, even flourish under it, to a degree that would hardly be credited unless experience proved the fact. In central and western India, for several years subsequent to 1861 prices prevailed which would cause misery in eastern and north-eastern India, yet with those prices the people of central and western India had abundant harvests, and made strides onwards in health, wealth, and strength. Experience will immediately show what the people in any given province can or cannot endure in this respect. And it is understood that in Behar and in many districts of Bengal prices dearer than one rupee for ten seers mean distress, and that prices dearer than one rupee for six seers mean mortality.

I need not dilate here on this part of the subject, as it has been already adverted to in Chapter II.

These considerations lead to the question how many lives may have been saved by the expenditure and the operations which have been described. It has been seen in Chapters II and IV that the condition of the people in the great rice tracts of Durbhunga, Mudhoobunnee, Ramnugger, Bettiah, Soopool, parts of Mozufferpore and Seetamurhee, and parts of Purneah, Dinagepore, and Rungpore, in March and April last, was this, that they had no food, no money wherewith to buy any, and no means of earning anything. I believe that the best informed persons are quite right when they say that the people of these tracts could not have come through the crisis without losing about one-third their number if Government had not stepped in and helped them. Such a consequence would represent the loss of about one and three-quarter millions of lives. Besides this broad sweep of destruction, there would have been sporadic mortality or individual casualties in large numbers in the districts of north Behar and northern Bengal generally; also in parts of Moorshedabad, of the districts round Burdwan, of Chota Nagpore and Sonthalia. This secondary degree of mortality would represent an aggregate which cannot be stated numerically, but it might perhaps represent a loss of nearly 500,000 lives. This would raise the possible mortality to a number of two millions and a quarter. The famine of 1769-70 afflicted very nearly the same region as that which has been visited by scarcity during the past year; and it was estimated by so competent an authority as Warren Hastings that one-third of the population of Bengal (or, as it has since been calculated, ten millions of souls) perished in the famine of 1770. This estimate must apparently have been excessive, still it may be referred to as having passed current for years, and as having been adopted by so able a thinker as James Mill in his History of India. In 1874, for several months three millions to four millions of people, and in two months four and a quarter to four and a half millions, were either living on, or helped by, grain or money supplied by Government or at the expense of the charitable relief fund. My estimate—and after all it is a mere estimate—is that more than half of this number, or upwards of two millions of people, must have fallen victims to the famine of 1874 if Government had not interposed on a great and costly scale.

It is apparently thought by some that in the provinces under the Government of Bengal the population is becoming too dense to be supported properly by the land; and that when the people have been protected by extraordinary efforts on the part of Government from famine and other calamities, there will remain the problem as to how they are to sustain themselves permanently in ordinary times. Without at this moment attempting a solution of this problem, which indeed demands the most vigilant attention, I will offer some facts and considerations which are immediately available as bearing upon it.

It has been mentioned in Chapter I that one of the measures by which the Government proposed to relieve distress was the promotion of emigration from the afflicted districts to parts of the country where food was cheaper and population less dense. For some years past about 30,000 persons have emigrated annually from Calcutta to the tea districts of Assam and to the British colonies. Very few of these emigrants come from the thickly peopled districts of Bengal or Behar; indeed Behar has hitherto contributed only 14 per cent. and Bengal proper barely 5 per cent. of all the emigrants who start from

Calcutta. In November and December 1873 attempts were made to collect, in the densely peopled districts of Sarun and Tirhoot, a large number of families who would be willing to emigrate to Assam. It was found that unless liberal bounties were allowed and a regular staff maintained for recruiting emigrants, no perceptible relief could be afforded to the distressed districts. It was considered that the money available for relief would be better spent in other ways, and so the attempt to promote emigration to the tea districts was abandoned. At the same time the usual emigration promoted by employers of labour in the tea districts and colonies was more than ordinarily active.

The authorities in British Burmah, in December 1873, suggested that the scarcity would afford a favorable opportunity for promoting emigration thither from the rice districts of Bengal. The Government of India made a considerable grant of money in January 1874 to meet the cost of beginning a system of emigration to British Burmah. An officer acquainted with emigration affairs was deputed to superintend the business, and all the district officers of Bengal were made his agents to procure emigrants and assist them in starting. The result of eight months' working of the Burmah emigration agency has been that 5,040 emigrants have gone to Burmah, and that the Government has spent Rs. 99,115, or over Rs. 19 per head, in sending them. Much of this outlay will be repaid by the emigrants from their future earnings. Out of the total number of emigrants to Burmah, 3,479 came from Calcutta and the districts immediately round the metropolis; 1,199 from Behar; 87 from the Chota Nagpore country; and none at all from northern Bengal.

These facts may throw some little light on the question whether the pressure of the population of Bengal generally is too heavy for the resources of the land. The statistics of emigration (so far as they go) would seem to show that it is not. The fewness of Bengalee emigrants can hardly be due to any mismanagement on the part of emigration agents, for Bengalees themselves are quite as unsuccessful in obtaining emigrants. The chief minister of the Cooch Behar State, a highly intelligent and capable Bengalee gentleman, recently attempted in vain to induce families from his native neighbourhood, the Burdwan country, to emigrate to Cooch Behar, where excellent virgin soil close to dear markets is available at low rents.

A review of the export returns of Bengal ports shows that in ordinary years—

about 400,000 tons of rice (besides 40,000 tons sent annually up the Ganges into the North-Western Provinces);  
about 175,000 tons\* of oil-seeds of different kinds;  
about 380,000 tons of jute and jute fabrics;  
about 10,000 tons of indigo and opium from Bengal alone—  
are exported annually beyond the sea.

These products, together with miscellaneous raw produce exports, occupy about 3,750,000 acres of the best arable land in the country; so that Bengal can in ordinary years support her own population, and can spare more than one-twelfth of her cultivated land for production of food and other staples for the use of other countries. These remarks, too, apply with special force to the very districts which have been lately the worst distressed, namely, north Behar and northern Bengal. The tracts recently most afflicted with scarcity export food largely in ordinary years, with the single exception of Sarun; but Sarun largely exports non-edible grains, which trade enables it to purchase food-supplies from many marts close at hand.

The agricultural statistics for Bengal have not been completed, but we know that, notwithstanding the great extension of cultivation during the last eighty years, there are still large areas of fertile soil awaiting the plough in Purneah, Dinagepore, Chittagong, Julpigoree, north Bhagulpore, and in Chota Nagpore.

Along the whole northern border of the most populous districts (which last year were also the most distressed) of Behar and Bengal, stretches a wide strip of fertile land awaiting the approach of cultivation. To the south of

\* The total export of oil-seeds from Calcutta is about 20,000 tons a year, but of this one-eighth comes from the North-Western Provinces.

central Bengal lie the Sunderbuns, where, even allowing sufficient land for forest reserves, there are broad areas of rich waste available for settlers from the thickly-peopled districts of Bengal. To the west again of Behar and Bengal are situate the districts of the Chota Nagpore division, where the population is comparatively sparse, and where perhaps barely one-fifth of the land has yet been brought under the plough. In the rich valleys of Assam and Cachar there is ample space for any population that may overflow from Eastern Bengal for very many years to come. There are thus on all sides of Bengal wide areas of uncultivated land available for such surplus population as may migrate from the districts of Bengal and Behar.

Sir George Campbell instituted the systematic collection of agricultural statistics in 1872. As yet this work has been completed for the district of Jessoré only. The results for that district show that much of the land produces two crops a year, and that lands given up wholly to food-crops yield on an average about one ton of clean rice to the acre ; that is to say, an acre supplies ample food for four people for a whole year. In this case the land is yielding enough for the dense population settled on it and for a large exportation besides. Estimates made by competent authorities for Backergunge, Dacca, and the Sunderbunds, put the yield for those districts above one ton of rice to the acre. And some of the best lands in eastern Bengal produce three instead of two food-crops in the year. It is probable that many parts of Bengal do not produce at this rate ; but it is believed that lands put down with two food-crops a year produce at a rate approaching to one ton per acre in eastern and northern Bengal. Probably lands bearing only one crop of rice a year in Behar and western Bengal may not yield more than half a ton of clean rice to the acre in ordinary years. Even this calculation would show that the land must be yielding enough for the population living on it, and for some exportation besides.

At the rate of half a ton of food to the acre, one square mile (640 acres) of food-crop land would support 1,280 persons. The area of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa (exclusive of Chota Nagpore, the Chittagong and Tipperah Hills, and the tributary states,) amounts to 133,924 square miles, with a population of 443 persons to the square mile. In the absence of correct agricultural statistics, the best estimate I can offer of the cultivated area is that in these three provinces about 48 millions of acres (equal to 75,000 square miles) are under cultivation. It is estimated that about four-fifths\* of this area bear food crops. By this reckoning 38 $\frac{3}{4}$  millions of acres produce food ; one-twelfth of the produce will more than meet all requirements for seed grain ; so there remain 35 millions of acres for food, which will support 70 millions of people. But the population of these three provinces is only 59 $\frac{1}{2}$  millions. Therefore if the estimate now offered is near the truth, there is, without reckoning the yield of double crop lands, a considerable margin of food produce to meet demands for exportation, and to cover short production or occasional failure of crops over limited areas.

In western Bengal, especially Burdwan, and in Behar, the wages of unskilled labour are very low indeed, and there are large classes who live poorly in ordinary years. Their depressed condition has been strikingly apparent during the troubles of 1874. But recent investigations have shown that even in the Burdwan country the poorer classes are, in respect of petty comforts and conveniences, better off than they were twenty years ago. In eastern and northern Bengal the wages of unskilled labour are comparatively high, there is no pauper class, and the petty occupiers of the land are almost to a man comfortably off. For instance in the Rungpore district, where the population averages 619 to the square mile, and the whole people make a comfortable living by the land, it would be almost impossible to collect

\* Note.—In the three sub-divisions of the Jessoré district, for which accurate statistics have been collected, the proportion of food-crop area and of double crop land has been found to be as follows :—

	Acres.
Total area—1,581 square miles, equal to	1,011,840
Total crop-producing land	749,833
Land producing two or more crops a year	75,659
Area under food crops	661,708

Out of this last total (661,708 acres) more than 75,000, equal to 11 per cent. of the whole, produces two food-crops in the year. In this tract, therefore, 89 per cent. of the cultivated land produces food, but it is notorious that the Jessoré district yields a large surplus of rice, sugar, and other food stuffs for export to Calcutta and Western Bengal. In Behar, where opium and indigo are largely grown, the proportion of food crops to other staples is probably smaller than in Jessoré.

five thousand workmen in any one place. The road-making, the palanquin-carrying, and the harder menial duties throughout Rungpore are usually done by sturdy immigrants who visit Rungpore and Cooch Behar annually from the less fertile districts of Chota Nagpore and Sonthalia.

Without at all controverting the opinion that the poverty of large classes of the people in some parts of the provinces under the Bengal Government does afford ground for anxiety, I believe that the above considerations forbid us to despond. There are evidently some facts which point the other way, and indicate that so long as the seasons are propitious and the crops prosper, the people will, as a whole, support themselves; that they can withstand a moderate degree of misfortune, and even a partial failure of harvests; and that nothing short of a really formidable calamity will drive them to the verge of danger.

The distress caused by widespread failure of crops in a country thickly inhabited by a purely agricultural population would not of itself show that the pressure of the population is too heavy in ordinary years. In very few countries could the people bear up against such a disaster as that. The rapidity with which the people re-established their agricultural livelihood in the summer of 1874, and with which vast crowds have, during the autumn of that year, left the relief works and relief centres all over Behar and northern Bengal, seems to show that the people look with entire assurance to the land proving sufficient for their support in ordinary years.

The events of 1874 have not indeed furnished any conclusive data for solving the question, which is perhaps insoluble, as to what may be the average amount of stocks of food in the country; but the experience of this year tends to show that these stocks in the distressed districts at the end of 1873 were larger than they had been supposed by many to be. The British Indian Association expressed in December 1873 their confident belief that "the stock of old rice in the country was not such as in any way materially to supply the deficit in the yield of the current year's crops." Again, my own estimates of the grain requirements of each district, which were framed after enquiry on the spot, reckoned on the people needing to consume some Government grain during February 1874, and a great deal more during March and April. Yet the result showed that in all the distressed districts the local supplies sufficed for the great majority of the population until the middle of March, and in some districts they lasted up to even later dates. Their exhaustion was constantly dreaded and frequently appeared imminent; still they held out in most places, though they ran short in some. Up to the end of April only 14,000 tons of Government grain had been consumed, as compared with a consumption of 57,000 tons anticipated in the estimates. It is true that we endeavoured at the outset by cash payments to prevent the consumption of Government grain, and that consequently during subsequent months, May to August, the Government grain was consumed at a rate fully equal to that which had been anticipated. Still there is the fact that stocks in great quantities were drawn out during the spring. Again at the end of the season, in September and October 1874, when the prospects of the winter rice-crop were nearly secure, considerable stocks of grain were brought to market in some of the districts where the failure of 1873-74 had been greatest.

The experience of 1874 has fully indicated the correctness of the policy which drew the Government supplies of grain mainly from Burmah and Saigon, and has also shown that rice is, for Bengal and Behar, the best kind of grain for Government to import. The small Government purchases made in Calcutta during December unavoidably disturbed markets and forced up prices to an extent out of proportion to the magnitude of the transactions, while the result showed that all the surplus food of northern India and of Orissa, that could by any means find means of transit, would work its way to the distressed districts by means of private trade. Considerable purchases (about 17,000 tons) were made by Government in Orissa; but a very much larger quantity (estimated to be about 50,000 tons) of grain found its way by private trade from Orissa into central Bengal, either for despatch to Behar or else to fill the vacuum caused by exportation from Bengal to Behar. The surplus grain of northern India, so far as the railway could carry it, was brought

into Behar by private traders, and thus the Government importations from beyond the sea were in addition to, and not in place of, the surplus grain available from other parts of continental India.

The people of Behar, as well as those of northern Bengal, preferred rice to wheat, and it seemed clear that they were not accustomed to eat wheat in any shape. In parts of Purneah, to which a small supply of northern wheat found its way, numbers are said to have boiled it like rice, and to have eaten it in that shape. Coarse grains, such as maize and the cheaper millets, were not imported by Government, with the exception of some small quantities, because they would not have kept sound longer than a very few months.

Burmah rice, though quite wholesome, was not so palatable to the people as Bengal rice; but this circumstance had its advantages, for it was certain that few would consume Government Burmah rice who either possessed or could buy Bengal rice. But in the last resort the hungry people ate the Burmah rice and thronged upon it. The Burmah rice kept well in India. Fears were expressed by experts from Burmah versed in the rice trade that the Government grain stored in bulk would heat and spoil, as large stocks often did in Burmah; but the Government rice from Burmah has almost everywhere kept well, has not heated, and has been comparatively free from weevils. Part of this result is probably due to the care taken by Government officers to construct good granaries, to keep them water-tight, and to maintain thorough ventilation throughout the stacks of grain bags.

We were not so successful in keeping other grains, such as gram and wheat. Some of the stocks were attacked by weevils and had to be sorted and sold off.

In respect to the state of the people, some questions must obtrude themselves, namely, in what physical condition has the administration of relief in 1874 left the masses of the population in the distressed districts? Has it improved the rates of wages? Has it caused any lasting material improvement? Has it aggravated or widened pauperism? Has it tended to demoralize the labouring classes? Has it altered, for better or worse, the relations between the people on the one hand and the Government and its servants on the other? Has it left any evil legacies behind it?

There is testimony, apparently universal, to the effect that all of the lately distressed classes are now, that is in October 1874, in quite as good health and strength as they have ordinarily been. That the humble classes connected with the land are in excellent working condition, is attested by the state of husbandry and by the area of well-tended cultivation at this moment. Of the classes lower in the social scale, some of them are ordinarily in poor physical condition, and they can hardly be otherwise now. Now that liberal relief has been dispensed for a time, they are declared by the best medical inspecting authorities to be not at all worse than usual, perhaps even to be somewhat above what must be acknowledged to be a low average state.

There is no sign as yet to show that the rate of wages has risen since the relief operations were undertaken. The intention was, in managing relief, and in introducing for a time causes which are in their nature artificial, to avoid every thing which might tend to permanently influence wages either way. It has been seen in Chapters II and IV that when daily wages were given for relief labour, they were made relatively low and kept down as nearly as possible to the standard of ordinary years. When relief labourers were enabled to earn much more than ordinary wages, that was under the piece-work system, which necessarily offers a premium upon extra exertion, and it was thought that this would not affect the future rates of wages proper. At all events it is presumable that the relief administration has not left the rates of wages at all worse than it found them, and that perhaps is all that could properly be expected. In north Bengal the rates of wages are moderately good and may yet rise. In north Behar they are very low, perhaps as low as they are anywhere, and lower than in most Indian provinces of equal wealth and culture. It were much to be wished, for the sake of the humbler section of the community, that they were higher. There seems at present to be no reason to hope that any essential improvement has set in. The only prospect of such improvement immediately discernible arises from the projects of railways and

canals in that region. If such works shall be undertaken, then doubtless the lower classes will receive their share of benefit in the shape of wages bettered.

As regards all the distressed districts save Burdwan, the belief is that pauperism has not been widened nor aggravated. At the period when the famine most touched the very poorest class, there were 750,000 persons on gratuitous relief and on light in-door labour. This number certainly included all the paupers of the distressed districts; but it included many more besides, namely, high caste people unable to beg or to work, and people unable to work and obliged to seek charity for a time only. The reduction of the total number began (as seen in Chapter V) in the beginning of August, and by the middle of September all those who could be made to obtain any support for themselves were discharged. Those who remained after the middle of September (444,000 persons, as seen in Chapter V) represented fully the pauperism of these districts. This number is equal to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the population of these districts taken at 18 millions in Chapter III—not a large proportion all things considered. These people ordinarily subsist on private charity. They also (as seen in Chapter V) have been undergoing discharge until they have disappeared almost entirely from the Government rolls everywhere save in the Burdwan division. There has been every desire on the part of Government and its officers to avoid retaining the poor people on the rolls a day longer than could be helped. Since their discharge these people must doubtless be again seeking private charity. In the absence of a poor law there must needs be a class who, by reason of sickness, infirmity, age, or helplessness, are forced to subsist on private charity. The relief system has preserved this indigent class in life through the crisis of the famine, when the sources of private charity were dried up. It has now restored them to their previous way of livelihood. There is no reason for supposing that it has done otherwise than leave them just as it found them. The pauperism of the country remains as it was. Its limits have not been enlarged.

There has been no demoralizing effect whatever visibly produced on the labouring classes. It is true that in the distressed districts these classes were for several months employed on the relief works. A small portion of them consisted of professional labourers, who work for hire in road-making and similar occupations. This limited class certainly made good earnings by the piece-work system; but as they did this by industry superior to the average, there is no reason to regard them as demoralized thereby. They were among the first to be discharged from the works as soon as the season changed for the better. They will doubtless labour in the future on public works and the like, much as they have laboured in the past. But the real bulk of the relief labourers consisted of the lower classes of ryots and cultivators and the field labourers. In Chapter IV it was shown that although the system of daily wages, unavoidably adopted as a temporary expedient, had demoralizing tendencies, the system of piece-work which was speedily substituted and finally adopted, had not any such tendencies, but quite the reverse. It is believed that these people, so far from being demoralized, were actually improved in morale by the system which was adopted. After the setting in of the rains the matter became one of demonstrable fact. For in what did the ordinary work of these classes consist?—Agriculture. After the rains set in, was there any reluctance on their part to return to their fields? Was there any slowness to sow? Was there any contraction of the average area of cultivation? Was any land ordinarily tilled left untilled? Was the first or autumn crop badly raised, tended, and gathered? Was the second or winter crop indifferently sown or inefficiently transplanted? Now all of the above questions, and any similar questions that could be put, may be answered emphatically in the negative. Never have these important things been done better by the people than during the summer and autumn of 1874. Though some persons here and there may have, during June last, been charged with unwillingness to quit relief, yet as a whole they have evinced a degree of alacrity and industry never surpassed by them within living memory. Such being the case, it is hard to see how they can have been in any way demoralized. On the contrary, they have probably learned a lesson regarding the vicissitudes of season and the expediency

of losing no chance of self-preservation by skill and promptitude. The only thing ever alleged against them was this, that in the autumn of 1873 they might have saved some part of their crops by turning streams to the uses of irrigation. But they were wanting in knowledge and not in will. Irrigation cannot be improvised by ignorant rustics for the first time in face of an emergency.

In respect to the relations between the people on the one hand and the Government and its servants on the other, if there is any alteration produced, it is for the better. The people cannot have witnessed unmoved the really vast preparations made by the British Government and the unflagging devotion of the relief officers of all grades. I am convinced that the people of all classes, from the highest to the humblest, regard with the utmost gratitude the policy and proceedings of Government on this occasion. They look back with extreme sensibility to the mortal peril which impended over them. Under Providence they attribute to Government their preservation from that peril. The impression left on their minds is profound, and will prove enduring. The sentiment of lively gratitude is not confined to the lately distressed districts, but pervades all the provinces under the Government of Bengal. The native press, the conversation of the people of all ranks, the addresses and representations constantly tendered to Government, teem and abound with proofs of this. From their bearing and conduct on this memorable occasion, all classes of the people, the zemindar, the landholder, the merchant, the trader, the ryot, the husbandman, the artisan, the labourers, the helpless poor, have risen in our estimation and regard. In respect to the officers of Government, their knowledge of the state of the people must have been greatly enlarged by the experience of the relief work, and they cannot but feel a more vivid interest than ever in the welfare of the people whose lives they have been instrumental in saving.

Respecting any supposed evil legacies of the famine, I hope that they are but few. Certainly a great expense has been incurred, about five and three-quarter millions sterling. This is an evil which cannot be overlooked or forgotten. It may be thought that a precedent has been established, which, whether for good or not, still is in either case most important. If any such precedent is thus established, I believe it will be for good, though I need not discuss its bearings here. Otherwise no evil legacy is perceptible. The famine relief may have not made the people better, but it has left them at least as well, morally and physically, as it found them. Some questions have been made prominent, the discussion of which may conduce to the public benefit hereafter. The insight of Government and its officers into the condition of the people and resources of the country has been improved. Public works for the prevention of famine in future have been designed. Another bond has been added to those bonds which unite the Government and its subjects. Above all, there is the moral effect of the elevated example which has been set by Government before the people at large.

One momentous lesson the famine has left behind it for our learning. That lesson teaches us the necessity of strenuous perseverance in the course of material improvement, on which the Government has already so beneficially and successfully embarked. It is only by such improvement that the country can be permanently protected from famine, and the necessity be avoided of adopting such extraordinary and costly remedies as those which have been described.

On a retrospect of the prevention of the famine, we cannot escape the question as to how the adoption of such extreme preventive measures on the part of Government in the future can be obviated. The calamity of 1874 is averted, the people are preserved in their ordinary condition, these fine districts are to pass on to 1875 with no unfavorable traces of the threatened destruction of 1874. But this has been effected at a very heavy financial cost to the State. During the period of safety there may be a disposition to forget that famine may happen again; still this contingency ought never to be absent from our reflections. Calamities of such awful magnitude as that which recently hung over these provinces are rare, and have been manifested at long intervals of time. We may hope that these provinces may, under Providence, long be spared such a visitation in the future. But at the ~~present~~, we must meet famine as we should meet war.

However such events shall again occur in Behar and in northern Bengal, there will be resources available which have been wanting on this last occasion. The Soane Canal, which, though incomplete, has been of great service\* already, will be effectively protecting from drought the best part of southern Behar. There will be a railway connecting Patna, the commercial centre and emporium of Behar, with north-east Tirhoot, the chief scene of the late calamity. There is hope that irrigation works on a lesser scale will be securing from misfortune of season those rice plains on the northern borders of Tirhoot and Chumparun and those tracts of Saran which have most suffered of late. In northern Bengal there will be a railway running through the heart of that territory from the Ganges at the south to the Himalaya on the north, which, had it existed in 1874, would have done much to prevent the famine in that region.

#### CONCLUSION.

WHATEVER may be the result of the proceedings of which the narrative is now concluded, we must be aware of the futility of mere human efforts for the averting of such a calamity as the famine of 1874; and we must be duly thankful for the mercy of Providence in sparing the lives of so many of our fellow subjects.

The Government of India can judge whether throughout the affairs, which have been described in this report, the officers of all grades working under the Government of Bengal have tried to act up to the terms of the resolution issued by the Governor-General in Council in March 1874, and whether they have striven to "perform the arduous task imposed upon them with the zeal, ability, and self-sacrifice which have always distinguished the servants of the Crown and of the East India Company in times of difficulty and danger."

No language that I can employ will adequately express my sense of the devoted manner in which the Government of Bengal has been served by the body of its officers during this period of extreme trial.

In a separate minute I have made a record of the services of the officers.

In another minute, also, will be set forth the various works for the relief and benefit of the poor undertaken during this crisis by the zemindars and other natives in the lately distressed districts, showing that their conduct has been worthy of their means, fortune, opportunities, and social position.

In recounting these events, the Government of Bengal thankfully remembers its obligations to the Government of the North-Western Provinces for the large staff of highly trained officers and the transport resources; to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army for the well-selected body of military officers, both European and Native; and to the Chief Commissioner of British Burmah for the timely arrival of the grain supplies.

Lastly, the Government of Bengal is gratefully conscious of the considerate guidance, the unvarying support, and the constant encouragement received by it in the fulfilment of its task, from the Governor-General in Council.

RICHARD TEMPLE.

\* At page 7 of this paper it was mentioned that irrigation from the unfinished channels of the Soane Canal had saved the crops on 150,000 acres. The amount of food thus secured to the country is reckoned by the Irrigation Department to have been 70,000 tons, valued at £550,000 sterling.

## NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES.

Letter from C. A. Elliott, Esq., Secretary to Government of North-Western Provinces, to the Secretary to Government of India, Department of Revenue, Agriculture, and Commerce,—dated 1st January 1875.

In reply to your demi-official letter dated 24th September 1874, and subsequent telegrams, I have the honor to forward reports on the scarcity of 1873-74 in the districts noted in the margin, with a brief narrative of the scarcity so far as it affected these Provinces.

2. The report has been urgently called for, and much delay has occurred in the receipt of the required information from the District Officers. The Lieutenant-Governor has, therefore, thought it better to submit this communication at once. A further despatch will follow, containing His Honor's remarks on the conduct of the officers who have borne the brunt of the work.

3. The Basti report is necessarily imperfect. The Magistrate, Mr. F. Elliot, under whom all the famine operations were carried on, was allowed to take furlough in October under the promise that he would submit a report before he left India. This promise he was unable to fulfil; but his report is expected soon, and will be forwarded when received.

*Narrative of the Scarcity of 1873-74, in the North-Western Provinces.*

The rains of 1873 began in the North-Western Provinces more than a fortnight later than usual, were very deficient in quantity, and ended rather earlier than usual. At their close it was reported, especially from the eastern and sub-Himalayan districts, that the ponds and tanks were nearly empty, and this fact, added to the early cessation of the rains and the want of subsequent showers, indicated the probability of an extensive failure of the rice crop, and that the consequence of this, wherever rice is the main crop, would be scarcity and distress. No time was lost in ascertaining the measure of the calamity. On the 7th November a circular order was issued to Commissioners of Divisions, instructing them to demand from Collectors a full general report on the state of the crops in their districts and on the prospects for the coming season. Replies to this circular were received in December and January. It was at once seen that for the Agra, Rohilkhand, and Meerut Divisions there was nothing to fear, and that of the other three plains' divisions that of Benares had suffered most. The Benares report indicated South Mirzapur, Ghazipur, and the northern parts of Basti and Gorakhpur as the parts where severe distress was to be looked for. The extent of distress was, however, uncertain. Everywhere great hopes were built upon the rabi; but the parts where the rice failed most completely are also those where a second crop is usually sown in the fields which are still moist after the rice has been cut, and the ground in which the rice had perished was as hard as iron, so that this second crop could not be sown. As the cold season advanced, it gradually became evident that the districts in which State relief would be necessary were divided into two classes: *first*, those in the east and north-east of the provinces (the sub-Himalayan tract of Basti and Gorakhpur and the east of Ghazipur), which in climate and agricultural conditions more or less resemble the western districts of Bengal; and *second*, the Bundelkhand districts in the south,—Banda, Hamirpur, Jhansi, Jalaun, and Lalitpur—with the southern portion of Mirzapur, all of which have suffered from a succession of bad years, and where the cultivators and landowners are in a state of chronic distress. In all these tracts the pressure of scarcity began to make itself felt at about the same time. Relief works, for which provision had already been made, were opened in most districts during January and in the beginning of February. In Jhansi and Jalaun they were about a month later. They were of the usual type, being mostly road embankments and other works of the kind on which unskilled labor could be employed.

Gorakhpur.	Allahabad.
Basti.	Banda.
Ghazipur.	Karwi.
Mirzapur.	Hamirpur.
Azamgarh.	Allahabad Divisional Review.
Benares Divisional Review.	Jhansi and Jalaun.
Jaunpur.	

2. Meanwhile the winter rains were anxiously expected. Every effort

Winter rains.

was made to supply their place by diligent irrigation, and advances were given by Government to all

cultivators who required them to dig wells; but as the drought continued, serious injury to the young crops became inevitable, and towards the end of January the situation became critical. The Christmas rains always make the difference between a good and a poor harvest; and this year, the ground having been less soaked by the rains than usual, the harvest would have been exceptionally poor. To add to the misfortune of the province, a frost such as had not been known for years set in about the middle of January and continued for some days; it did not affect the hardy wheat and barley, but the arhar, peas, and other more delicate crops were completely burnt up by it. At length in the first week of February the long delayed rain fell in moderately heavy showers, and the heavy calamity which seemed to be impending was averted. Though too late to do all the good which it might have done had it fallen at the usual time, it was of incalculable benefit, and through its influence a year of high prices was substituted for a year of famine.

3. The attendance on relief works, however, continued slowly to increase

Inspection of eastern districts by Special Famine Commission. throughout the month. The numbers were greatest

in the eastern districts, and as there was by this time little doubt that these were the only districts in which distress would be general and severe, it was thought desirable to obtain a comprehensive view of their condition. Messrs. Simson (Junior Member of the Board) and Carmichael (Commissioner of Benares) and Colonel Davidson, R.E., Superintending Engineer, were accordingly commissioned to make a tour through these districts and report to Government the results of their inspection. Their reports (dated 22nd and 30th March, 1874) showed that in Benares and Azamgarh there was no ground for apprehension, and that in Ghazipur distress was not nearly so widespread as had at one time been feared. Mirzapur the committee were unable to visit. By far the worst districts were Gorakhpur and Basti, and in each of these the northern portion had suffered most severely. Rice is there the main staple, and it entirely failed. The winter crops which are ordinarily sown for a second harvest, after the rice had been reaped, could not be put into the ground on account of the early cessation of the rains. In a tract so extensive; and in which the failure both of the spring and the autumn crops had been so general, it was not to be expected that the rabi harvest would bring much relief. For the last week of March the daily average attendance on relief works was about 30,000 in Gorakhpur and 22,000 in Basti, and there was evidently a steady tendency to increase, which it was probable would continue till the setting in of the rains dispersed the people to field work. Meanwhile other measures of relief were sanctioned. In the Maharajganj Tahsil of Gorakhpur one-half of the rabi revenue kist was remitted, and in Basti the Collector was authorised to propose remission or suspension of revenue where he thought it necessary. Advances were to be made to zemindars and ryots for the purchase of rice seed to the extent, if needful, of a lakh and a half in Gorakhpur and of half a lakh in Basti. The seed was procured from Nipal, sale being permitted by the Darbar to purchasers furnished by the Collector with a certificate, and the total amount of advances in Basti was Rs. 43,209, and in Gorakhpur Rs. 91,471. In Gorakhpur it was apprehended that the northern grain markets in the Maharajganj Tahsil might run short in the rainy season, when importation is difficult. The Collector was therefore empowered to advance money, repayable in a year, without interest, to traders who should guarantee to store grain at specified places, such grain being purchasable by Government at a price fixed so as to cover all the expenses of the trader. The grain stored under these conditions amounted to 90,865 maunds, and though eventually not required by Government, its presence in the district probably had a beneficial action upon prices. To merchants who preferred to import grain for sale at their own discretion, money was to be advanced, repayable without interest in six months, and in this way 10,700 maunds were imported.

4. This estimate of the situation formed by Government in March was

Ultimate extent of distress.

confirmed by the event in all but one particular.

It was thought probable that the distress would last

till the autumn crops (especially the rice) were ripe, and that the relief works would have to be kept open till then. The unexpected improvement in the spring harvest, however, diminished the distress considerably. The effect of the new supply of food was marked in Ghazipur, where the harvest was decidedly above the average, by a speedy decrease of the numbers employed on relief works, which fell from 3,000 in the end of February to 800 by the middle of April, and in the last week of July the works, which had been kept open for some weeks of the rains in deference to the wishes of the District Officer, were everywhere closed. In Gorakhpur and Basti distress may be said to have reached its highest point in the beginning of April, when the daily numbers on the works averaged 52,000 in the former and 28,000 in the latter district. But even after distress had attained its maximum the numbers on relief works continued steadily to increase. One reason for this was that the rabi outturn, though fairly good on irrigated land, had not been so plentiful in these districts as in Ghazipur, and in the sub-Himalayan rice tracts the area under this crop was very small. By the end of the month there were 91,000 people on the works in Gorakhpur and 84,000 in Basti. But the large and increasing proportion of women and children could not escape notice, and there were considerable doubts as to the extent of the distress which prevailed. On the one hand, it seemed that the relief works might be popular on account of the difficulty of exacting a full day's labor from the crowds who thronged to them and the liberty they enjoyed, and on account of the wages being paid in cash at a time when agricultural labor was very slack and there was nothing else for the people to work at. On the other hand, there was the hypothesis that these works were the sole refuge of a famished and despairing population whose only means of supporting life was by the wages earned on them.

5. Sir John Strachey lost no time after assuming the reins of Govern-

Visit of Lieutenant-Governor to eastern districts. ment in visiting the distressed districts, in order to form his opinion with the aid of the best local advice.

The conclusion he came to was that, on the whole, the former explanation was the correct one, and that there was not really any such severe distress as to deserve the name of a famine. He decided that it was not advisable to close the works, but that efforts should be made to make the relief more distasteful by exacting a larger tale of work, and that the wages should be reduced to the minimum which would provide subsistence for the laborers. Evidence was adduced that the scale had until lately been too high, and that the relief works had attracted sellers not of necessities only but of luxuries. The rates now fixed were on the scale which had been introduced by the Magistrate of Gorakhpur about three weeks previously, the allowance for infants only being lessened by one-half. They were—

For a man ...	... 5	Gorakhpuri pice (or one anna).
" a woman ...	... 4	ditto.
" a child able to work ...	... 3	ditto.
" an infant ...	... 1	ditto.

Thus the exclusion of all who were not in need of aid was left to be gradually effected by the low rates of wages and the strict demand of a fair day's work from every laborer. The Collectors of both districts were authorised to allow zemindars to indent on the relief works for men, and laborers who refused to accept employment under these requisitions with the promise of full wages were to be turned away from the works. The rates of wages were also to be lowered as soon as should be consistent with safety, but the necessity of such a measure was practically obviated by the early setting in of the rains.

6. There was a further question to be considered—how the people were to

Disposition of laborers during rains. be disposed of during the rains. No less than

219,000 men, women, and children were congregated on relief works in the districts of Gorakhpur and Basti in the beginning of May. It was obviously impossible to provide out-of-door employment for these multitudes during the rainy season. One of the chief works was the raising of an embanked road through the centre of a great depression which would be filled with water in the rains; and in other places, though the work itself might not be in a swamp, it would have been difficult to hut the laborers